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THE STORY OF CHRIST

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THE STORY OF CHRIST

By GIOVANNI PAPINI

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BY

GIOVANNI PAPINI

Translated by Mary Prichard Agnetti

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PREFACE

(FROM THIRD ITALIAN EDITION)

For fifty years those who call themselves 'free spirits' because they have deserted the Army for the Dungeons have had a mania for murdering Jesus a second time—for killing Him in the hearts of men.

As soon as it appeared as if Christ's second agony were drawing to a close, the burial parties came forward. Presumptuous buffalo-like blockheads who had taken libraries for their stalls; aerostatic minds that believed they could touch the summit of the sky by mounting in the flying balloons of philosophy; professors turned into satyrs by the fatal intoxications of philology and metaphysics: all these armed themselves—it was the will of Man!—like so many crusaders against the Cross. Certain buzzing ballad-mongers, with an imagination vivid enough to shame the famous Radcliffe, set out to demonstrate that the Gospel story was a legend, through which one could at most reconstruct a purely natural life of Jesus, who was one-third prophet, one-third wizard, and for the rest a self-seeking demagogue; He performed no miracle beyond the hypnotic cure of some obsessed person; He did not die upon the cross but awakened in the cold tomb and reappeared with a mysterious aspect assumed in order to make people believe that He had risen from the dead. Others proved, as four and four make eight, that Jesus is a myth created in the times of Augustus and Tiberius, and that all the Gospels are to be reduced to a poorly-wrought mosaic of prophetic texts. Others represented Jesus as an eclectic adventurer, who had gone to school with the Greeks, Buddhists, and Essenes, and had knit together his plagiarisms

as best he could to persuade people that He was the Messiah of Israel. Others again made him out to be a mad humanitarian, forerunner of Rousseau and the divine Democracy: an excellent man for His time, but who would to-day be shut up in a lunatic asylum. Others, lastly, in order to finish Him off once and for all, took up again the idea of a myth, and by virtue of parallelisms and of puzzlings of brain arrived at the conclusion that Jesus was never born anywhere on earth.

But who should take the place of the great Exile? Deeper and deeper, every day the ditch was dug deeper, but they did not succeed in altogether burying Him away from us.

And here is a regiment of lamp-lighters and refashioners of the spirit engaged in fabricating religions for consumption by the irreligious. All through the nineteenth century they furnished these in pairs and half-dozens at a time. The religion of Truth, of the Spirit, of the Proletariat, of the Hero, of Humanity, of the Fatherland, of the Empire, of Reason, of Beauty, of Nature, of Solidarity, of Antiquity, of Energy, of Peace, of Pain, of Pity, of the Ego, of the Future, and so on and so forth. Some of these were nothing but patchings-up of a Christianity robbed of its crown and bony structure—a Christianity without God; most of them were political or philosophical theories endeavouring to change themselves into mysticisms. But the believers in them were few and of a worn-out enthusiasm. Those ice-cold abstractions, although sustained sometimes by social interests and literary passions, could not fill the hearts from which it was desired to pluck out Jesus.

Then an attempt was made to put together facsimiles of religion which should, better than the others, provide what men seek in religion. The Freemasons, the Spiritualists, the Theosophists, the Occultists, the Scientists, all believed that they had found the infallible substitute for Christianity. But these hashers-up of musty superstitions and decayed occult lore, of counterfeit symbolism and sour humanitarianism, these ill-wrought patchings of an exported Buddhism and a falsified Christianity, satisfied a

thousand or two of women at ease, of two-legged crustaceans, of condensers of the void—and there they stopped.

In the meantime, the last Antichrist was approaching, between a German manse and a Swiss University chair. Jesus—said he, coming down from the Alps to the sun—Jesus has mortified men; sin is good, violence is good; everything that says 'yes' to life is good. And Zarathustra, after having hurled into the Mediterranean the Greek texts of Leipzig and the works of Machiavelli, began, with the grace to be looked for in a German who is begotten of a Lutheran pastor and has just descended from a Swiss professorship, to skip about at the foot of the statue of Bacchus. But though his songs might be sweet to the ear, he never succeeded in explaining what this adorable Life might be to which one should sacrifice such a living part of man as is his need of overcoming the beast in himself; nor could he say in what way the true Christ of the Gospels was opposed to life—He who wished to make it higher and happier. And the poor diseased Antichrist, when on the point of going mad, signed his last letter 'The Crucified.'

2

However, after so much consumption of time and ingenuity, Christ is not yet ejected from the earth.

His memory is everywhere. Upon the walls of churches and schools, on the summits of belfries and mountains, in the street tabernacles, at the head of beds and above the tombs, millions of crosses recall to mind the death of the Crucified. Scrape away the frescoes in the churches, remove the pictures from altars and houses, and still the life of Christ fills the museums and picture galleries. Pitch mass-books and breviaries and formularies into the fire, and you will still find His name and His words in all the books. Even blasphemies are an involuntary record of His presence.

Whatever you may do, Christ is an end and a beginning, an abyss of divine mysteries between the two great divisions of human history.

The Pagan and Christian eras can never be confounded. Before Christ—after Christ. Our era, our civilization, our life, begin with the birth of Christ. We may make researches into the past and find out things that happened before He came, but that age is no longer ours, it is marked with other numbers and characterized by other systems, it no longer excites our passions : it may be beautiful, but it is dead. Cæsar in his day made more noise in the world than Jesus ; Plato taught more sciences than Christ did. We may still discuss both these men, but who gets angry on Cæsar's behalf or against him ? And where to-day will you meet platonists or anti-platonists ?

Christ, on the contrary, is still a living issue. There are still those who love Him and those who hate Him. There is a passion for the Passion of Christ and a passion for His destruction. The angry chafing of so many against Him means that He is not yet dead. The same people who are addicted to denying His teaching and His existence pass their lives in recalling His name to mind.

We live in the Christian era. And it has not yet ended. In order to comprehend our world, our life, ourselves, we must refresh ourselves at His fount. Every age must rewrite His Gospel.

Our own age, and more than any other, has done this. The author of this book ought, then, at this point to justify his having written it. The justification, if there be any need of such, will be manifest to those who read the book through to its last page.

No time ever was so divided from Christ as our own, and none ever needed Christ so much. But to find Him again the old books do not suffice.

No life of Christ, even were it written by a writer of greater genius than ever yet attempted the task, could be more beautiful and more perfect than the Gospels. The candid sobriety of the first four historians can never be surpassed by all the marvels of style and of poetry. And very little can we add to what they said.

But who reads the Evangelists to-day ? And who, though he read them, could really read them ? The glosses

of the philologists, the commentaries of the exegetes, the various readings and the erudition of the annotators, give very little help : they are but repairs to the letter, the amusements of patient minds. The heart wants something else.

Every generation has its own cares, its own thoughts—and its own madnesses. The old Gospel must be translated afresh for the benefit of the lost. In order that Christ may always be alive and eternally present in the lives of men, it is absolutely necessary to resuscitate Him from time to time—not by any means to re-dye Him in the colours of the day, but to present afresh, in new words and with reference to the existing conditions, His eternal truth and His unchangeable history.

The world is full of these resuscitations in book form, learned or literary ; but to the author of this book it seems that many of them are forgotten and others are neglected, —especially in Italy after our most recent experiences.

Another book, and a larger than the present one, would be necessary to recount the history of the histories of Christ. But the most widely read and known can be roughly divided into two main classes : those written by churchmen for believers, and those written by learned men for the use of the laity. Neither the one nor the other can satisfy him who seeks the Life in a life.

3

Almost all the lives of Jesus intended for the devout exhale something of a musty staleness that from the first page repels the reader who is accustomed to more delicate and substantial food. There is about them an obnoxious odour of extinguished candle, a stench of evaporated incense and bad oil, which takes away one's breath. One cannot respire freely in that atmosphere. The incautious reader who comes to them and remembers the lives of great men written in a great manner and has some notion of the art of writing and of poetry feels depressed when he is immersed in that flabby, turbid, patternless prose— all

darns and patches—words that were alive a thousand years ago but now are lifeless, petrified, tarnished, like the stones of a lapidary or the phrases in a collection of formulas. The scene changes and becomes worse when these exhausted steeds wish to break suddenly into a lyrical gallop or an eloquent trot. These unpractised graces, that assumption of smart dress, as by one who writes fine things for provincial academies in the manner of an Arcadian purist, that false heat lukewarmed by a honeyed dignity—these dishearten the boldest and most fortified reader. And when they do not descend into the depths of the thorny mysteries of scholasticism they fall into the blatant oratory of the Sunday homily. They are books, in fact, made for believers in Jesus—that is to say, for those who could, in a certain sense, do without them. There are also some very good ones, but laymen, the indifferent, the profane, the artists, those who are habituated to the greatness of ancient literature and to the newness of modern books, do not seek those volumes, or as soon as they handle them throw them aside. And yet it is precisely these readers that should be gained, for it is they who are lost to Christ, who make opinion and who count in the world.

The other writers, the learned folk who write for neutrals, succeed still less in bringing to Jesus the souls who do not know how to be Christian. The chief reason is that hardly ever do they set out to write with that purpose in mind; they themselves, indeed, or almost all of them, are among those who need to be brought back to the true and living Christ. They fail also because their method, which, as they say, aims at being historical, critical, scientific, leads them to dwell upon the text and upon external facts, whether to establish or to destroy them, rather than upon the value and the light, which, if one wills to do so, can be rediscovered in those texts and facts. Most of them tend to find the man in the God, the normal in the miracle, the legend in the tradition, and above all they search for interpolations, falsifications, and apocryphal stories in the earliest Christian literature. Those who do not reach the conclusion that Jesus never existed, deduct as much as

they can from the testimonies that remain to us about Him, and by virtue of 'ifs' and 'buts,' 'considerings' and 'respectings,' doubts and hypotheses, succeed neither in writing reliable history nor, fortunately, in destroying the history contained in the Gospels, for so many are the contradictions among themselves that every new system has at least the merit of reducing to zero all those previously excogitated. In sum, these historians, with their apparatus for cutting up and rending to pieces, with all their resources of textual criticism, of mythology, of palæography, of archæology, of Semitic and Hellenistic philology, do no more than mince and dissolve, by virtue of reductions and cavillings, the simple life of Christ. The most logical conclusion to be drawn from all this rambling discourse and constant tossing to and fro is either that Jesus never came upon the earth, or, if perhaps He really did come, that we can say nothing certain about Him. Christianity remains, not easily to be got rid of, but all that these enemies of Christ can do is to go East and West searching for what they call the 'founts' of Christian thought, with the hardly dissembled intention of resolving it all into Jewish, Greek, or even Indian and Chinese precedents—as much as to say: See! This Jesus of yours, when you get down to bedrock, was not only a man but a poor sort of man, so true it is that He never said anything that the human species did not know by heart before He came!

One might, then, ask of these deniers of miracle how they explain the miracle of a syncretism that around the memory of an obscure plagiarist has created an immense movement of men, of thought, and of institutions, so strong and revolutionary as to have changed the face of the world for several centuries. But we will not ask them these and many other questions, at least for the moment.

To put it briefly, if from the unanimity of bad taste that marks the compilers of devotional manuals one passes in search of illumination to the monopolists of 'historical truth,' one tumbles from pietistic tediousness into sterile confusion. The former do not know how to lead wanderers to Jesus and the others lose them altogether in the mazes of

controversy. Neither the one nor the other is inviting to readers: that is to say, they write badly. If they are divided in faith, they are united in inability to write. And to cultured minds, who know, if but in passing, the poetry of the Gospels, the divine idyll and tragedy, unctuous emphasis is as repugnant as the frigidity of university professors. In fact, the only life of Christ that is still read by many laymen to-day—though it was written so many years ago and there have been so many changes of taste and opinion since then—is the apostate cleric Renan's. It is repugnant to every true Christian because of its dilettantism, outrageous even in its laudations; repugnant also to every pure historian because of its compromises and insufficiant criticism. It may seem to be the work of a sceptical romancer married to philology, or of a Semitist suffering with literary nostalgia, but Renan's book has the merit of being written—that is to say, it gets itself read even by people who are neither believers nor specialists.

To get itself read willingly is not the only, nor the chief, merit that a book can have, and he who should be satisfied with that alone, and should not allow weight to other qualities, would show himself to be occupied with vain things rather than a true lover. But let us agree that it is a merit, and not a small one either, in a book: that is to say, for a thing that sets out precisely to be read. Especially when its purpose is not to be an apparatus for study simply, but ought to reach to what they used to call the 'motion of the affections,' or, to say it frankly, to remake men.

It has seemed to the author of the present book—and if he is wrong he will be very glad to be persuaded of his error by those who are more up-to-date than he is—that among so many thousands of books which recount the story of Christ there is need for one which shall satisfy him who seeks, not dogmatic counterproofs or the results of minute and learned research, but some nutriment appropriate to the soul, to the needs of this century, to the needs of all men.

A live book, he means, one which shall make Christ, the ever-living, more alive with a love-ful vividness to the eyes of living men. That shall make Him to be felt as present,

with an eternal presence, to the people of the present time. That shall refigure Him in all His living and present grandeur—perennial and therefore also actual—to those who have reviled and rejected Him, to those who do not love Him because they have never seen His true face. That shall manifest how much there is of the supernatural and symbolical in his human principles—in his principles so obscure, simple, and popular ; and how much of familiar humanity, of popular simplicity, shines through even His temporary station as heavenly liberator and through His end as the divine tortured—and Risen—One. That shall show, finally, in that tragic epic, to which of a truth heaven and earth have set their hand, how much teaching made for us and adapted to our time and life can be extracted, and not only from the letter of the discourses but also from the very succession of events which start from the stable of Bethlehem and end with the cloud of Bethany.

A book written by a layman for laymen who are not Christian or are only Christian in name. A book without the disagreeableness and flabbiness of vestry pietism, and without the insipidity of the literature which calls itself 'scientific' only because it lives in perpetual terror of affirmation. And a book, finally, written by a modern who has some amount of respect for, and knowledge of, art, and knows how to keep the attention of even the hostile.

4

Such a book the author of the present does not himself pretend to have written, though he confesses to having often thought about it ; but at least he has attempted, so far as his abilities allow. to approach to that ideal.

And he declares at once, with sincere humility, that he has not written a work of 'scientific history.' He has not done so, simply because he could not ; but he would not even had he possessed all the necessary knowledge. Be it noted, among other things, that the book has been written almost entirely in the country—in a distant and wild region —with very few books available, and without the counsel

of friends and revision by expert hands. So that it will not be quoted by the Doorkeepers of the Higher Criticism and by double-spectacled reviewers who are 'authorities on the subject': the which matters little if it can do a little good to some soul—even to a single one. Because its purpose is to be, as has been said, a rediscovery of Christ—of the Christ embalmed in evaporated aromas or defleshed by the knives of university professors—and not a fresh interment.

The writer bases himself upon the Gospels: as well upon the Synoptics as upon the Fourth Gospel.

He confesses that the dissertations and disputations as to the authority of the four historians, as to dates, interpolations, and interdependence, their verisimilitude and derivation, have all left him indifferent. We do not possess documents more ancient than the Gospels; nor other contemporary documents, Jewish or pagan, which allow us either to correct them or give them the lie. He who attempts that labour of distinguishing and comparing may dissipate much doctrine but cannot by one step advance real knowledge as to Christ. Christ is in the Gospels, in the apostolic Tradition, and in the Church. Beyond that all is darkness and silence. He who accepts the four Gospels must accept them in their full entirety, syllable by syllable, or else he must reject them from first to last and say: We know nothing. It is a hopeless business to wish to distinguish in those texts the certain from the probable, the historical from the legendary, the foundation from the additions, the primitive from the dogmatic. That sort of thing finishes almost always, as a matter of fact, in the despair of the reader, who, in the midst of the babel of systems which contradict each other and go on multiplying from decade to decade, ends by not finding any way out and abandons them all. The most famous New Testament histologists agree in one thing only: that out of the great mass of primitive literature the Church was able to select the Gospels which were most ancient and which have been accounted ever since the most reliable. One does not ask for more.

In addition to the Gospels, the author of this book has kept in view those 'logia' and 'agrapha' which have most preserved the evangelical flavour, and also some apocryphal texts which he has used with discretion. And finally, some nine or ten modern books among those which he had at hand.

It seems to him that, so far as he can see, he has sometimes departed from commonly held opinions and that he has figured a Christ who has not always the neat features of the ordinary icons, but he could not assert this with certainty, nor does he hold to whatever novelty there may be in his book, which is written in the hope that it will be good rather than pretty. A more likely occurrence is that he has repeated things already said by others—things that his ignorance did not allow him to know had been said. In these materials the substance, which is truth, is unchangeable, and there cannot be anything fresh about it except the way of representing it in more efficacious forms in order that it may be more readily apprehensible.

Just as he wished to avoid the labyrinths of erudite higher criticism, so he has aimed at not being involved overmuch in the mysteries of theology. He has approached Jesus in simplicity of desire and love, just as the fishermen of Galilee, who had the good fortune to be more ignorant than himself, approached Jesus when He was speaking.

While remaining faithful to the words of Revelation and to the dogmas of the Catholic Church, he has been at pains to represent those dogmas and words in ways different from the usual, and in a style that is violent in antithesis and exaggeration—a style reanimated by means of expressions that are both rude and resented—in order to see whether the people of to-day, who are accustomed to the aromatics of error, could be aroused by the blows of truth.

If there be any reader whom this does not always please, the author dares to apply to himself the words of St. Paul: 'To them that are without law, I became as without law that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I am become

all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the Gospel's sake. . . .'

The author has kept in mind not only the Hebrew but the ancient pagan world, in the hope of showing the novelty and greatness of Christ in comparison with those who preceded Him. He has not always followed the order of time and events, because it served better his particular purpose—which is not, he repeats, properly historical—to group together certain thoughts and facts, in order to illuminate them more strongly, instead of leaving them dispersed here and there in the course of the narrative.

In order not to give a pedantic appearance to the book, the author has suppressed all references to quotations and has determined to do without footnotes. He does not wish to appear what he is not—one learned in book-lore; nor does he wish his work to smell, even faintly, of the oil proper to lights of erudition. Those who understand these things will recognize the authorities that are unnamed and the solutions which he has chosen in regard to certain problems of harmony; other people, those, namely, who seek only to know how Christ has appeared to one of themselves would be bored by critical apparatus and by dissertations at the foot of the page. One word only he would like to say here with regard to the Sinner who wept at the feet of Jesus: though most people see two separate scenes and two different women in the Gospels, the author, for reasons of art, has taken leave to unite the two in one; for doing so he craves pardon, which will, he trusts, be granted him since it is not a question of dogma.

He must also say that he has not been able to develop in his own way the episodes in which the Virgin Mother appears; and this in order not unduly to lengthen the book, which is already long enough, and especially because of the difficulties of showing in passing all the rich fount of religious beauty that there is in the person of Mary. Another volume would be necessary for this, and the writer is tempted to risk, if God gives him life and sight, 'saying of her what never was said of another woman.'

Those at least who are familiar with the Gospels will

perceive that other things, of minor importance, have been passed over, and that others, on the contrary, have been drawn out in an unusual way. Because these have seemed to the writer more appropriate than those to his purpose—which is, to put it in a word disused and almost repugnant to the high-brows, that of edification.

5

This is intended as a book—the scornful laugh is anticipated—of edification. Not at all in the sense of mechanical religiosity, but in the human and virile sense of remaking souls.

To build [1] a house is a great and good deed: a giving of shelter against winter and night, a climbing aloft. But to edify a soul, to construct with the stones of truth! When one speaks of 'edifying' you see nothing but an abstract word, dead through use. To edify, in the ordinary significance of the term, means to build a wall. Who among you has ever thought of all it needs to build a wall—to build it well—to make a real house, one that shall stand, firm in the earth, covered and constructed according to rule, with the walls plumb and a roof that does not leak? And all that is needed for building—squared stones, well-baked bricks, sound beams, well-burnt lime, fine and clean sand, cement that is not old and strengthless. And the placing of everything in position, with an eye and with patience, to make the stones kiss each other, not to add too much water or sand in the mortar, to keep the walls moist, to be able to close up the joints and to smooth the plaster. And so the house rises day by day towards the sky—a man's house, where he will bring his wife, where his children will be born, where he can offer hospitality to his friends.

[1] The Italians use 'to edify' both in the natural and the metaphysical sense: they say 'edify a house' (edificare una casa), as well as 'edify a soul.' The word *edificare* is here translated 'build' when applied to a house, and 'edify' when a soul is spoken of.—TRANSLATOR.

But most people think that to make a book it is enough to get an idea and then to take so many words and put them together in such a way that they look nice. That is not true. A kiln of tiles, a heap of stones, is not a house. To build a house, to build a book, to edify a soul, is a labour to employ the whole man and all his responsibilities. This book seeks to edify Christian souls, because this seems to the writer to be a necessity that does not brook delay, now at this time and here in this country [Italy]. Whether it will succeed or not the writer of it cannot say to-day.

But he hopes that people will recognize that this is a book, a real book, and not a sample-show, an aggregate of old fragments. A book that may be mediocre and mistaken but is constructed : a work edified as well as edifying. A book that has its design and architecture, a real house with atrium and architrave, its apartments and cellars—and also with some opening to the skies and to the landscape.

The author of this book is, or at least would like to be, an artist, and it was not in him to forget this quality of his on this occasion. But he declares that he had no wish to produce what used to be called a work of ' fine literature,' or, as they say now, of ' pure poetry,' because truth was more in his heart, this time at least, than beauty. But if his powers, scarce though they be, as a writer enamoured of his art, shall succeed in persuading one single soul the more, he will be happier than ever on account of the gifts he has been dowered with. His proclivity to poetry has helped him, it may be, to render more ' actual,' and in some way fresher the recalling of ancient things, which seem petrified in the priestcraft of consecrated images.

For the man of imagination everything is new and present. Every large star which moves at night may be the one that shows you the house where a son of God is born ; every stable contains a manger that may be a cradle when it is filled with dry hay and clean straw ; every bare mountain, set in a flame of fire and light on golden mornings up above the still enshrouded valley, may be Sinai or Tabor ; in the grass-fires and charcoal pyres which shine of an evening on the hills, you may see the flame which God lights to

guide you through the desert; and the column of smoke which arises from the poor man's chimney shows the returning worker from afar the road home. The ass which bears upon its pack-saddle the shepherdess who comes from milking is the same beast that the prophet rode towards the pavilions of Israel, or the one that descended towards Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. The dove that sighs on the edge of the slated roof is the same that announced to the patriarch the end of the deluge, or descended upon the water of Jordan. All is equal and omnipresent for the poet, and every history is sacred history.

The author asks pardon, however, of his austere contemporaries if, more frequently than is fit, he lets himself go in what to-day is called, almost with disdain, eloquence —cousin-german of rhetoric and adulterous mother of emphasis and of other dropsies of clear elocution. But perhaps it will be admitted that one could not write the story of Christ in the same plain and peaceful style that suits well the story of Don Abbondio.[1] Manzoni himself, when he sang of the Nativity and the Resurrection, did not resort to the manner of spoken Florentine, but to the more solemn imagery of the Old and New Testaments.

The writer knows very well that eloquence is displeasing to the moderns, in the same way that vivid red cloth displeases the city dame, and the Church organ displeases the minuet-dancer, but he has not always succeeded in avoiding it. Eloquence, when it is not borrowed declamation, is the natural overflowing of faith, and in an age that does not believe there is no room for eloquence. Yet the life of Jesus is such a drama, such a poem, as should always call for those 'immoderate and furious vocables' of which Pessavanti speaks, rather than for the overmuch used words that are always at our disposal. Bossuet, who knew something about eloquence, once wrote this: 'Plût à Dieu que nous puissions détacher de notre parole tout ce qui flatte l'oreille, tout ce qui delecte l'esprit, tout ce qui

[1] The reference is to one of the chief characters, a priest, in Manzoni's famous novel, 'The Betrothed' (*I Promessi Sposi*).—TRANSLATOR.

surprend l'imagination, pour ne laisser que la vérité toute simple, la seule force et l'efficace toute pure du Saint Esprit, nulle pensée que pour convertir ! ' Most excellent, but how to attain to it !

The author of this book would have liked at certain moments to possess a bold and consuming eloquence that should make every heart tremble, a magnificent imagination that should transport souls, by a sudden magic, into a world of light and gold and fire. At other moments, on the contrary, he almost lamented being too much of an artist, too much of a litterateur, too much of a guilloche or mosaicist, and not to be able to leave things in their potent nudity. One only learns when it is completed how to write a book as it should be written. When you get to the last word, with all the experience you have acquired by your labour, you ought to begin again at the beginning and do the work anew. But who has—I do not say the strength, but—the idea of doing this ?

If this book takes, on some pages, the form of preaching, it will not be a great fault. In these times when, as a rule, only old women and the aged attend preachings in church, where often mediocre things are said in a mediocre manner, but where, more often still, truths are repeated that ought not to be neglected, others must be thought of—the wise, the ' intellectuals,' the refined, those who never enter a church but do sometimes enter a bookshop. For nothing in the world would these people listen to the preaching of a friar, but they deign to read it if it is printed in a book. And this book, be it said once again, is made especially for those who are outside the Household of Christ : other people, those who have remained within, united with the heirs of the Apostles, have no need of my words.

The writer also craves pardon for having written a book of many, too many pages, on a single theme. To-day, when the majority of books, including his own, are nothing but nosegays, or trusses of pages put together from newspaper articles, or of fugitive short stories, or of notes from a pocket-book, and as a rule do not exceed two or three hundred pages, to have written one of over six hundred

pages on a single theme will appear like presumption, and ridiculously foolish presumption. The book will certainly seem long to modern readers, more accustomed to light biscuits than to the household half-pound loaf, but books, like days, are long or short according to how they are filled. And the author is not so cured of pride as to believe that nobody will read the book because of its length, and he is under the illusion, indeed, that it can be read with less tedium than other shorter volumes. So hard it is to save oneself from vanity even when one would wish to save others from it!

6

Some years ago the author wrote another book to recount the melancholic life of a man who wanted at one time to become God. Now in the maturity of age and knowledge he has tried to write the life of a God who made Himself a man.

This same writer, in the time when he allowed his mad and voluble humour to run wild along all the roads of the absurd, holding that the negation of everything transcendent resulted in the necessity of ridding oneself of all bigotry whatever, profane and worldly bigotry also, in order to attain to an integral and perfect atheism—and in this he was as logical as Dante's 'black cherubim,' for the only choice given to men is that between God and Nothing, and when one runs from God there is no valid reason for submitting to the idols of the tribe and to all the other fetishes of reason and passion—in that time of fever and pride he who writes this offended against Christ as few others before him had done. However, after about six years—six years which were a time of great travail and desolation without and within—after long months of agitated reconsideration, all at once, interrupting another work, and almost urged and driven by a force stronger than himself, he began to write this book on Christ, which now seems to him to be an inadequate expiation of that sin. It has often happened to Jesus to be most tenaciously loved by those who

previously hated Him. Hate is sometimes nothing but love imperfect and not conscious of itself : and in any case hate is a better apprenticeship to love than is indifference.

How the writer has come to discover Christ by himself, travelling along many roads which at last all led to the feet of the Gospel Mount, would be a long and over-difficult story to tell. But his example—that is to say, the example of a man who always had from childhood an intense aversion for all recognized faiths, and for all the Churches, and for every form of spiritual vassalage, and then passed, with delusions as profound as the enthusiasms had been ardent, through many experiences, the most diverse, the most novel, that he could find—the example of this man, I say, who has exhausted in himself the ambitions of an age, unstable and unquiet as few previous ages have been ; the example of a man who, after so much wanton behaviour, so much scoffing and inane raving, turns to Christ : this, perhaps, has a significance not wholly private and personal.

He has not turned to Christ through weariness, for, indeed, now begin for him a more difficult life and a more laborious obligation ; nor through the fears of old age, for he can still call himself young ; nor through desire for worldly fame, for in the climate of these times he would profit more by being a flatterer than a judge. But this man, turned to Christ, has seen that Christ is betrayed and —gravest of all offences—is forgotten. And he has felt the impulse to bring Him back to the memory of men and to uphold Him.

For it is not only His enemies that have deserted and marred Him. Those also who were His disciples when He was alive understood Him but partially and at the end abandoned Him ; and many of those who were born within His Church do the contrary of what He commanded and have more affection for His painted images than for His living example, and when they have worn out lips and knees in some material devotion believe themselves to be equal with Him and to have done as much as He asked, as

much as He asks now, despairingly and almost always in vain, together with His saints, for nineteen hundred years.

A story of Christ, written to-day, is an answer, a necessary reply, an inevitable conclusion: the weight that is placed on the empty pan of the balance, that out of the never-ending war between hate and love there may come at least the equilibrium of justice. And if they shall tell the writer that he is a late-comer, that will not wound him. He who is born too soon often appears to be a late-comer. The setting sun is the same sun that at the same instant tinges the new morning in a distant land. Christianity is not an antiquated thing, with all the good that was ever in it assimilated now by the stupendous and imperfectible knowledge of modern times; for many of us Christianity is so new that it has not even begun to be. The world to-day seeks Peace more than Liberty, and there is no secure peace except under Christ's yoke.

They say that Christ is the prophet of the weak, but in reality He came to give strength to the languid and to elevate the downtrodden higher than kings. They say that His religion is a religion for the sick and moribund, yet it heals the infirm and resuscitates the sleeping. They say that He is against life, but He really overcomes death. That He is the God of sadness, while in fact He calls upon His followers to rejoice and promises an eternal banquet of joy to His friends. They say that He has introduced sadness and mortification into the world, whereas, when He was alive, He ate and drank and allowed His feet and hair to be anointed with perfume and held in aversion hypocritical fasts and vainglorious penitences. Many people have left Him because they have never known Him. To such people especially this book should be a help.

The which book is written, if the claim may be pardoned, by a Florentine, that is to say by one who issues from that nation which, alone of all nations, chose Christ as its own King. Girolamo Savonarola first had the idea in 1495 but could not carry it out. It was taken up again amid the distresses of the threatened siege in 1527 and approved by a

large majority. Over the principal entrance of the Palazzo Vecchio, opening between Michelangelo's 'David' and Bandinelli's 'Hercules,' a marble slab was fixed to the wall bearing these words :

JESUS CHRISTUS REX FLORENTINI
POPVLI P. DECRETO ELECTUS.

That inscription, though altered by Cosimo, is still in existence; that decree was never formally abrogated and annulled, and the writer of this book is proud to acknowledge himself, even to-day after four hundred years of usurpations, subject and soldier of Christ the King.

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JESUS was born in a stable. A stable—a real stable—is not the bright and graceful portico that Christian painters have imagined as the birthplace of the Son of David, as if ashamed that their God should have rested amidst poor and unclean surroundings. Nor is it the stucco 'crèche' which is represented to-day by our modern statuette makers—the neat and pleasing stable, prettily decorated, with its clean and tidy manger, its ass and ox in humble ecstasy; with angels hovering above its roof holding fluttering garlands; with kings in rich mantles and shepherds in hoods kneeling on either side. Such a scene may indeed represent the dream of a novice, it may be the pride of a certain class of priest, a pleasing toy for children, or may truly represent Manzoni's 'vaticinato ostello' (the 'hostel of prophecy'), but it is not the stable wherein Jesus was born.

A real stable is the abode of cattle, the prison-house of those animals that labour for man. The stable of olden times, the poor stable of the country of Jesus, is neither the portico adorned with pillars and capitals, the scientifically equipped stable of the wealthy of to-day, nor the dainty, thatched barn of Christmas eve. The real stable consists of four rough walls, a dirty pavement, and a tiled roof supported by beams. The real stable is dark, dirty and evil smelling; nothing in it is clean save the manger, where the master prepares the forage.

Fresh with the coolness of early morning, undulating in the breeze, the fields of spring, sunlit, moist, and perfumed, have been freshly mown. The green grass and the tall, slender blades have fallen under the ruthless scythe together with the opening flowers—red, white, yellow and blue. All is faded and dry and of the pale and uniform

colour of hay, and the oxen have dragged home the dead spoils of May and June.

Grass and flowers, dry grasses and flowers that are still scented, lie in the manger, to appease the hunger of the servants of man. The cattle slowly curl their thick, black lips about the hay, and in due course the flower-decked meadow, transformed, returns to light again upon the straw that forms their bed.

In such a stable as this Jesus was born. The dirtiest spot on earth was to be the first dwelling-place of the only Pure One, born of woman. The Son of Man, destined to be devoured by beasts bearing the name of men, was first cradled in the manger wherein animals feed upon the marvellous blossoms of spring.

Nor was it by chance that Jesus was born in a stable. Is the world anything else than a huge stable wherein man devours and emits? The most beautiful, the purest and most divine things—does not man by some infernal alchemy transform them into what is loathsome? And when he has done this he stretches himself upon the remains of his own creation, and he calls that 'enjoying life.'

In this temporary pigsty of a world, whose dirt no trimmings and perfumes can conceal, Jesus appeared one night, born of a stainless virgin, armed with nought but His own innocence.

Jesus' first worshippers were animals, not men. Amongst men He sought out the simple-hearted, amongst the simple-hearted He chose children. Simpler even and meeker than children, the domestic animals welcomed Him. Although humble and the servants of beings weaker but fiercer than themselves, the ox and the ass had before then seen multitudes kneel worshipping them. Jesus' own people, the Chosen People whom Jehovah had freed from Egyptian bondage, the people whose leader had left them to their own devices in the wilderness while he ascended to the mountain-top to commune with the Eternal One, had forced Aaron to make for them a calf of gold that they might worship it.

In Greece the ass was sacred to Ares, to Dionysus, and to Apollo Hyperboreus. Balaam's ass, wiser than the prophet himself, had, by speaking, saved its master's life; Ozus, king of Persia, placed an ass in the temple sacred to Phta, and caused it to be worshipped. But a few years before the birth of Christ, Octavianus, going down to join his fleet on the eve of the battle of Actium, met an ass-driver with his beast, named Nicon—the Victor. When the battle was over the Emperor erected the statue of a bronze ass in the temple which he built to commemorate the victory.

Kings and multitudes had thus before this worshipped the ox and the ass; but they had been kings of the earth, and peoples who exalted matter. Now Jesus was not born to reign upon the earth, to love what is material. His advent marked the end of the worship of animals, the end of Aaron's weakness and of Augustus' superstition. Indeed the brutes of Jerusalem will slay Him one day, but in the meanwhile those of Bethlehem warm Him with their breath. When at last Jesus shall enter into the city of death for the final Passover, He will come riding on an ass; but He, a greater prophet than Balaam, coming to save not the Jews alone, but all mankind, will not swerve from His path for the hostile braying of all the asses of Jerusalem.

II THE SHEPHERDS

After the animals came their guardians. Even had the angels failed to announce to them the great event of the Nativity, they would nevertheless have hastened to the stable to see the child of the stranger woman.

Shepherds usually dwell apart and in remote regions, and have no knowledge of the doings of the outside world and its festivities. They are interested in any incident, however trifling, that occurs in their neighbourhood. During the long winter night of the solstice, while watching their flocks they had been startled by a sudden brightness in the sky and the sound of the angel voices. And

when, in the dim light of the stable, they perceived the young and lovely woman mutely contemplating her new-born child, when they saw the Babe whose eyes had but now opened upon the world, and saw His rosy delicate flesh, His mouth that as yet had never tasted food, their hearts melted within them with tenderness. A birth, the birth of a human being, of a soul that is but now become incarnate, that is come to suffer among other souls, is always a miracle so full of pain as to move to compassion even the simplest, those even who are incapable of fully understanding its mystery. And to those men who had received a message this new-born infant was not an unknown being, not a child like any other, but 'The Child' to whose coming their suffering race had looked forward through the long ages.

The shepherds offered what little they possessed, that little which is so much when bestowed in a spirit of love. They brought the white products of their daily labours —milk, cheese, wool, and the lamb itself. Even to-day, in our mountain regions where the last vestiges of hospitality and the sense of human kinship are fast disappearing, as soon as a woman is delivered, the sisters, wives and daughters of the shepherds hasten to give the child welcome, and no one comes empty-handed. One will bring a couple of new-laid eggs, another a jug of milk still warm from the cow, a third a small cheese that is still soft to the touch, and there is always the fowl to make broth for the mother. A new being has appeared on earth, has uttered his first cry, and the neighbours bring their gifts to the mother as if to comfort her.

The shepherds of old, who were poor themselves, were not contemptuous of poverty. Childlike themselves, they delighted in contemplating childhood. Their race had been generated by the shepherd of Ur and saved by the shepherd of Midian. Their first kings had been shepherds. Saul and David had herded flocks before they herded tribes. But the shepherds of Bethlehem, of whom the cold world knew nothing, were humble. A child of poverty was born among them, and they regarded him lovingly and lovingly

offered their simple treasures. They knew that this infant, born in poverty of poor parents, born humble amidst humble things, born of common people among people who were common, was destined to be the Redeemer of the humble, of those ' men of good will ' upon whom the angel had evoked the blessing of peace.

The ' unrecognized king,' the wanderer of the Odyssey, was welcomed by no one with such delight as by the swineherder Eumæus in his hovel. But Ulysses was on his way to Ithaca to seek revenge, returning home to slay his enemies. Jesus, on the contrary, came to condemn revenge, to preach forgiveness to our enemies. The loving tenderness of the shepherds of Bethlehem has obliterated the memory of the pious hospitality of the swineherd of Ithaca.

III THE MAGI

A few days later, three wise men arrived from Chaldea and prostrated themselves before Christ. They came, possibly, from Ecbatana, or maybe from the distant shores of the Caspian Sea. Mounted on their camels with their bulging saddle-bags swinging on either side, they forded the Tigris and Euphrates, crossed the great desert of the nomad tribes, and skirted the shores of the Dead Sea. Similar to the comet that appears from time to time, to announce the birth of a prophet or the death of a monarch, a new star had gone before them into Judea. They came to worship a king, and instead they found a little child, wrapped in poor swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.

Nearly a thousand years before, a queen had come out of the East on a pilgrimage to Judea, and she also had brought rich gifts : gold, perfumes, and precious stones. But she had found a great king upon the throne, the greatest king who ever reigned in Jerusalem, and she had learned from him what no one else could teach her.

The Magi, who accounted themselves wiser than all kings, found an infant but a few days old, a child unable still to ask a question or give an answer, one who, on

reaching man's estate, would scorn all earthly treasures and all wisdom generating from material things.

The Magi were not kings, but in Media and Persia they were the masters of the kings. They guided the monarchs who ruled over their people. At the same time prophets and ministers, they alone offered sacrifices, interpreted dreams, and could commune with Alma Mazda, the 'Good God'; alone they knew the secrets of the future and the destiny of mankind. They killed with their own hands all evil beasts and birds of ill-omen. They purified alike the fields and the souls of men; the gods favoured their sacrifices alone, and no king ventured to wage war without consulting them. They possessed the secrets of heaven and earth, and ruled both in the name of Learning and Religion. In the midst of a people who lived for what was material only, they stood for what was spiritual.

It was right, then, that they should come and kneel before Jesus. After the beasts representing Nature, after the shepherds representing the People, this third power—Wisdom—knelt beside the manger at Bethlehem. The ancient sacerdotal caste of the East paid thus homage to the new lord who will send his messengers westwards. The Wise Men knelt before Him who would subject the understanding of words and that of numbers to the new understanding of Love.

The Magi at Bethlehem represent the theologies of the past ages recognizing the final Revelation; wisdom humbling itself before Innocence, wealth prostrating itself at the feet of Poverty.

They brought Jesus the gold He would scorn one day; and not that Mary was poor, and would have need of it on their journey, but in prescient obedience to the Gospel injunction, as yet unproclaimed, 'sell all thou hast and give to the poor.' They did not offer frankincense that the reek of the stable might be overcome, but because their rites were about to be abolished, and their altars would no longer need perfumes and the smoke of incense. They offered myrrh which serves to embalm dead bodies, aware that this Child is destined to die young and that

the Mother, who now smiled, would need it one day to preserve His body.

In their sumptuous, regal and sacerdotal robes, they, the mighty, the wise, the soothsayers, kneeling on the rough ground offered themselves as pledge for the world's obedience.

All the investitures to which He was entitled had now been bestowed on Jesus, and hardly had the Magi taken their departure than those whose hatred would pursue Him even unto death began their persecution of Him.

IV OCTAVIANUS AUGUSTUS

When Christ appeared among men, criminals were the rulers and the world obeyed them. He was born the subject of two masters—one, more powerful, dwelling far away in Rome, the other, more infamous still, reigning nearer at hand in Judea. By dint of bloody massacres one villainous but fortunate adventurer had usurped the empire, while the other, using the same means, had possessed himself of the kingdom of David and Solomon. Both these tyrants had reached high place by ways that were infamous and illegitimate—civil war, treachery, cruelty, and slaughter. Born to work together, they were become friends and accomplices, in so far as this was compatible with their respective positions—vassalage of the one towards the other.

Octavianus, the son of the money-lender of Velletri, had proved cowardly in war, revengeful in victory, treacherous in friendship, cruel in reprisal. To a condemned wretch who begged only that he might be granted burial, he replied that the question of burial would be settled by the vultures. To the inhabitants of Perugia who cried out for mercy in the midst of a massacre, he answered, 'Moriendum esse!' With his own hands, before ordering him to be strangled, he tore out the eyes of the prefect Q. Gallius, whom he suspected of treason. Having finally obtained possession of the empire, dispersed and annihilated his enemies, and arrogated to himself all judicial and executive

powers, he assumed the mask of mansuetude, retaining of all his vices of youth that of concupiscence only.

This corrupt being was master of the western world when Jesus was born, and it was never revealed to him that the One destined to overthrow what he had built up was already come into existence. Octavianus satisfied himself with the easy philosophy of a degenerate and plagiaristic Horace: take your pleasure to-day, revel in wine and love, death without hope awaits us, let us not waste a single hour. In vain did Virgil, the Celt, the lover of fields and of shady vales, the friend of the placid ox and of the golden bee, who, descending with Æneas to look upon the sufferers of Avernus, sought relief for his restless melancholy in the music of verse: in vain did Virgil, the gentle, pious Virgil, announce a new era, a new order, a new race, a heavenly kingdom, a kingdom less spiritual indeed than that which Jesus will presently proclaim, but nevertheless better, purer and nobler than the infernal reign which was taking ground at the time. But his efforts bore no fruits, since to Augustus his verses had been but a pastoral fantasy, and he the Emperor (the corrupt lord of corrupt subjects) had perhaps believed himself to be the predestined Saviour, the restorer of the reign of Saturn.

But Augustus' powerful Oriental client, his vassal in Judea, Herod the Great, did perhaps have an inkling before his end of the significance of the birth of Jesus, of the True King who was come to overthrow the kings of evil.

V. HEROD THE GREAT

Herod was a monster, one of the worst monsters the burning deserts of the East had ever produced.

He was neither a Hebrew, a Greek nor a Roman. Of Idumean origin, this barbarian cringed before Rome and aped the Greeks in order to ensure his hold over the Jews. The son of a traitor, he had usurped the kingdom of his masters, the last representatives of the Asmonæan dynasty, and in order to legalize his act of treason, he had married

a woman of that house, Mariamne, whom he eventually put to death on the strength of a groundless suspicion. This was not his first crime. He already had treacherously drowned one of his brothers-in-law, Aristogolus, and suppressed another, Joseph, together with the last ruler of the conquered dynasty, Irchanus the Second. Not content with having rid himself of Mariamne, he murdered her mother, Alexandra, as well, and the sons of Baba, merely on account of their being distantly related to the Asmonænai. During the intervals between these crimes he took pleasure in causing a number of prominent Pharisees to be burnt alive—Juda of Sarafaus and Matthias of Margoloth being among them. At a later date, fearing that the sons he had had by Mariamne might seek revenge for their mother's murder, he had them strangled, and shortly before his death he ordered the execution of a third son, Archæleus. Voluptuous, suspicious, violent, avid of riches and glory, he found peace nowhere, neither in his home, in Judea nor within himself. That they might forget the murders of which he was guilty, he despatched a gift of three hundred talents to the people of Rome, to be spent in public merry-making. He humbled himself before Augustus, who allowed his infamies to pass unpunished, and at his death bequested him, together with the sum of ten million drachmas, a golden bark and one of silver for Livia.

This upstart soldier, this half-civilized Arab, attempted to ingratiate himself with and conciliate both Hellenes and Hebrews. He succeeded, indeed, in corrupting the degenerate descendants of Socrates, who actually went the length of erecting his statue in Athens, but the Hebrews never once ceased to look upon him with aversion. In vain did he rebuild Samaria and restore the Temple of Jerusalem—to the Jews he remained pagan, usurper to the end.

Apprehensive and suspicious as all miscreants and upstart princes become on growing old, every rustling leaf, every falling shadow, was a source of terror to him. Superstitious, like all Orientals, and believing, as he did, in premonitions and omens, it was but natural that he

should have believed the story told him by the three who, led by a star, had come from the remotest regions of Chaldea into the land of which he had unlawfully possessed himself. He shuddered at the thought of any pretender, even of an imaginary one, and when he learned from the Wise Men of the birth of a King of Judea, the barbarian's heart quaked within him. As the days passed and the astrologers failed to return and acquaint him with the place where the latest offspring of the house of David had appeared, his terror increased, and he presently ordered the massacre of all the male infants of Bethlehem. Flavius Josephus is silent concerning this last act of the sovereign, but may not one who is guilty of the murder of his own sons be deemed capable of immolating the children of others ?

The number of infants sacrificed to Herod's dread has never been ascertained. It was not for the first time that babes had been torn from their mothers' breasts to perish by the sword in Judea. The Jews themselves in past ages had punished the cities of their enemies by slaying the aged, the matrons, the young men and the children, sparing the maidens only, whom they reduced to slavery and concubinage. Jehovah himself, the jealous God, had already ordered similar massacres. The Idumean was but applying the law of reprisal to the people who had submitted itself to his rule.

We do not know how many innocent babes perished at this time, but if Macrobius may be believed there was among them an infant, son of Herod himself, who was under the care of a nurse at Bethlehem. The aged monarch, the wife-murderer and slayer of his own offspring, would certainly not consider this coincidence in the light of a punishment, and the news of the mistake probably caused him no sorrow. He himself, indeed, was destined to succumb soon under the loathsome diseases from which he was suffering. Even before death decomposition had set in, his feet were like burning coals and his breath was fetid and gasping. Disgusting even to himself, he attempted one day to take his own life by stabbing himself while at

table. He died finally, however, but not before ordering Salome to have a number of young men put to death who were languishing in the prisons at the time.

The Massacre of the Innocents was the last act of Herod. This immolation of innocents around the cradle of an Innocent, this holocaust of blood for a new-born Infant, destined to shed His blood for the redemption of sinners, this human sacrifice for Him who would Himself suffer sacrifice, is of a prophetic significance. After Him thousands and thousands of innocent beings will perish, guilty of the crime of believing in His resurrection. He was born to die for others, and lo, thousands of others die for Him, in expiation, it would almost seem, of His birth.

There is in this decimation of His contemporaries, this bloody sacrifice of the pure, a redoubtable mystery. They belonged to the same generation which will one day betray and crucify Him ; but the victims of Herod's soldiers never lived to witness the immolation of their Lord. By their death they saved Him and saved themselves in all eternity. They were innocent, and innocent they will remain to the end of time. Their fathers and brothers who survived them will avenge them one day, but the Lord's petition, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!' will secure their pardon. At nightfall, when the houses of Bethlehem were enveloped in darkness and the first lights had begun to appear, the Mother set forth, going secretly, like a fugitive, a thief, as one pursued. She was indeed robbing the king of a life, saving a hope for the people. Clasped to her breast she carried Him, her Man-Child, her Treasure, her Pain.

Travelling westward, she crosses the ancient land of Canaan, and by easy stages (for the days are short) comes at last within sight of the Nile, in that land of Mizraim that had cost her fathers so many tears fourteen centuries before.

Egypt, whose soil has generated all the infamies, all the splendours of the past ages, that African India, where the waves of history came to break and die ; where, but a few years since, Pompey and Antony ended their dream of

empire together with their lives ; that prodigious country, originating from the waters, scorched by the sun, soaked in the blood of its peoples, inhabited by its gods in the semblance of animals, that paradoxical, supernatural country, Egypt, by the very law of contrast, became the predestined refuge of the Fugitive.

Egypt's riches were of the mud, of the slimy, reptile-breeding mass the Nile pours out each year upon the desert. Egypt's haunting dread was of death ; her prosperous people rebelled against death, denied death's power, even believed it possible to conquer death by copying matter, by embalming, by erecting representations in stone of the human form. The fat and prosperous Egyptian, offspring of the mud, worshipper of the bull and of the Cinocephalis, strove against death. For his dwelling-place in a future life he prepared vast necropoli filled with swathed and perfumed mummies and wooden or marble images, he had pyramids erected over his dead body, that the imperviousness of the stone might preserve it from decay.

When Jesus will be able to deliver His message He will pronounce sentence against Egypt—against that Egypt which is not only on the banks of the Nile, which, with its kings, vultures and serpents, has not yet disappeared from the face of the earth. Christ will supply the final answer to the Egyptian's dread. He will condemn all her treasures originating from and destined to resolve in impurity ; He will condemn all her fetishes ; His victory over death shall be accomplished without the aid of her carved coffins, her mausoleums, and granite or basalt monuments. He will conquer death by teaching that sin destroys more relentlessly than the worm, and that the only safeguard against corruption is the sweet aroma of spiritual purity.

These worshippers of the mud, these servants of riches and of the animals, will never achieve their salvation. Their tombs—be they mountain high and adorned like the gynæcea of queens—will be found to hold nought but ashes and decomposition. Man cannot triumph over death by

copying life on stone and wood, for stone crumbles and wood rots and both return to dust, both are mire only—eternal mire.

VI LOST AND FOUND AGAIN

The time of exile in Egypt was short. In His mother's arms throughout the weary journey, rocked by the swaying of the patient ass, Jesus was brought back to His father's house at Nazareth, back to the humble dwelling with its workshop, where the noise of the hammer and of the file ceased only with the setting of the sun.

The canonical evangelists give no account of this period of His life ; on the other hand the apocryphal writers are too prolix, and deal with it so fully that they become almost defamatory.

Luke, the learned physician, says merely that ' the child grew, and waxed strong.' thereby testifying that He was neither delicate nor weak. Jesus was certainly a healthy, normally developed lad, as indeed He must be who will one day restore health to others by the mere touch of His hand.

Every year, Luke tells us, Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of unleavened bread, which commemorates the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptian bondage. They travelled with a large party composed of neighbours, friends and retainers, that the presence of many might relieve the tedium of the journey and make the distance seem shorter. They went joyfully, more as if on their way to a feast than to participation in the commemoration of a time of grievous suffering, for the Pasch had become in Jerusalem the solemn and great assembly, where the Jews gathered from all parts of the Empire.

Twelve Paschs had elapsed since the birth of Christ. In that year, after the group of Nazarenes had left the holy city, Mary discovered that her Son was not of the company. She sought Him a whole day, asking every passing acquaintance whether they had seen Him, but no one could give her news of Him. On the following

morning, the mother retraced her steps and entered Jerusalem once more, wandering from street to street and from square to square, following every passing lad with her dark eyes, questioning every woman at her doorway, beseeching the country-folk who had not yet departed to help her in her search. A mother who has lost her child knows no rest until she finds him ; to herself she gives no thought ; she is oblivious to fatigue, heat or hunger, indifferent to the curiosity she awakens in the passers-by ; she neither shakes the dust from her garments nor smooths her hair. Her straining eyes behold the image of him alone who is no longer by her side.

At last, on the third day, Mary went up to the Temple, and, searching in all the courts, finally perceived, in the shade of a portico, a group of old men engaged in conversation. She approached them shyly, for those long mantles and flowing beards seemed to denote that these were persons of too great an importance to listen to a simple woman from Galilee. But on drawing near she saw, in the very centre of the group, her Jesus, with His wavy hair, His shining eyes, His sunburnt face, and fresh mouth. The venerable doctors were discussing the Law and the Prophets with Him ; were asking Him questions to which He answered ; and He was questioning them in His turn, and they were instructing Him, amazed that one so young should be so well acquainted with the Lord's word.

For a brief moment Mary stood still watching the group, and hardly able to believe her own eyes. Her heart that, but a moment before, had been throbbing with anxiety, now throbbed harder still with astonishment. Suddenly, restraining herself no longer, she spoke her Son's name in a loud voice. The old men made room for the woman, who, clasping her treasure to her breast, held Him close without a word, allowing the tears she had so long restrained to fall upon His face.

Seizing His hand, she leads Him away, and now that she has found Him, that He is once more beside her, the thoughts of the mother who rejoices turn to her who has but recently been in such despair.

'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing!'

'How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'

Weighty words these when spoken by a child of twelve to the mother who has just passed through three days of agony on his account.

'And they,' the Evangelist goes on to tell us, 'understood not the saying which He spake unto them.' But we, after many centuries of Christian experience, can readily grasp the meaning of these words which seem, at first, harsh and unfeeling.

Why do ye seek Me? Do ye not know that I can never be lost to any one, not even to those who will lay Me in the tomb? I shall be everywhere and in every place where there is one who believes in Me, even though his eyes see Me not. No one can lose Me who cherishes Me in his heart. Nor shall I be lost even when I shall be alone in the desert, alone on the waters of the lake, alone in the Garden of Olives, alone within the sepulchre. Even though I hide Myself I shall return; though I die I shall rise again. He who loses Me cannot help finding Me again.

And who is this father of whom thou speakest, this father according to your laws? My true Father is in heaven; He is the Father who spoke face to face with the patriarchs, who inspired the words in the mouths of the prophets. I must acquaint Myself with all that He taught them concerning Me; I must know His eternal will, the laws He has laid down for His people, the covenants He has made with them. If I am to fulfil what He has ordained I must be about the business that is indeed His. Of what account is a human tie, a legal, a temporal tie, in comparison with a mystical, spiritual tie—a tie that is eternal?

VII THE CARPENTER

But the hour had not yet come of Jesus' final departure. John's voice had not yet been heard, and so, with His

parents, He resumed the journey to Nazareth, returning to Joseph's workshop to help him at his trade.

Jesus did not attend to the school of the Scribes nor to that of the Greeks, but He did not lack masters; He had three masters, and better ones could not be found among the doctors. They were Nature, Work and the Book.

It must ever be borne in mind that Jesus was a labourer and the adopted son of a labourer. We must not seek to deny the fact that He was born poor, among poor people who toiled with their hands, and that, up to the time when He first proclaimed His mission, He earned His own bread by the work of His hands. Those hands that were raised in blessing above the simple-hearted, that healed the leper, that shed light upon the eyes of the blind, that raised the dead, those hands that were pierced with nails upon the cross, were hands that had been bathed in the sweat of hard and strained labour, whereon rough toil had set its horny mark. They were hands that had held tools, had driven home the nail—the hands of a workman.

Jesus laboured with matter before He toiled with souls. He Himself had known poverty before He invited the poor to feast with Him in His kingdom. He was not born of rich parents, in a comfortable house, or upon a bed covered with purple. The descendant of kings, He dwelt in the house of a carpenter: the Son of God, He was born in a stable. He belonged neither among the great, to the military aristocracy, nor to the circles of the rich, nor had He a place in the Sanhedrin of the sacerdotal order. He was born among the humblest, below whom there are only waifs, beggars, outlaws, slaves, criminals and harlots. When He will cease His manual labour for His spiritual one He will abase Himself still lower in the eyes of the respectable by choosing His friends amongst the miserable rabble that are beneath even the plebeians themselves. In the meanwhile, until the day when He will descend into the limbo of the living before descending into that of the dead, Jesus' place in the hierarchy of those castes that eternally divide mankind was that of a poor labourer.

Jesus' craft was one of the four most sacred and ancient

ones. That of the ploughman, the mason, the smith and the carpenter are, among the manual arts, those most closely connected with the life of man ; the most innocent and religious. Whilst the soldier may degenerate into a highwayman, the sailor into a pirate, the merchant into an adventurer, the ploughman, the mason, the smith, and the carpenter cannot change, do not become corrupt. They handle the commonest of materials, and, working openly in the sight of all men, it is their task to transform these materials into palpable, solid and true creations which are necessary to all. The peasant tills the soil and from it brings forth the bread which is the food alike of the hermit in his cave and of the murderer in his prison ; the mason squares the stone and with it builds the house, the house of the poor as well as the palace of the king and the temple of God ; the smith heats and fashions the iron to give the soldier his sword, the peasant his ploughshare, the carpenter his hammer ; the carpenter saws and nails the wood and makes the door which protects the house from thieves, he makes the couch whereon thieves or honest men will die.

These simple things, these familiar, ordinary, common things, that are so familiar, ordinary and common that we no longer notice them, that our eyes, accustomed as they are to more complicated wonders, no longer even perceive, are the simplest and earliest of man's creations, but more miraculous, more useful than all other subsequent inventions.

Jesus the Carpenter spent His youth in the midst of such common things which He made with His own hands, and it was through them that He first came in touch with men in the sacred and daily intimacy of life—that of the home. He made the table whereat it is so pleasant to sit surrounded by one's friends, even though there be a traitor among them ; the bed whereon man draws his first and last breath ; the chest wherein the peasant wife stores her few poor garments—her aprons, the kerchiefs for festive occasions, and the white and smoothly folded shifts, that were part of her dowry ; the kneading-trough

wherein the flour must lie while the leaven works within it and prepares the mass for the oven ; the chairs whereon the old people rest by the fire in the evening talking of their past youth.

How often, whilst the pale shavings curled under the plane, or the sawdust dropped upon the ground to the strident rhythm of the saw, must Jesus have thought of His Father's promises, and the prophecies of old, of a different task that would require neither rule nor timber, but would be of the spirit and of truth.

His trade taught Him that to live means to transform what is dead and useless into what becomes living and useful ; that the basest material, moulded and refashioned, may become precious, lovely, and a helpful friend to man ; it taught Him that in order to save, it is necessary to transform, and that, just as a bed for the child and its mother may be fashioned out of the gnarled and twisted trunk of an olive-tree, so may the most iniquitous usurer, the most wretched harlot, be transformed into beings fit for the Kingdom of Heaven.

VIII FATHERHOOD

In Nature, where the sun shines alike upon the just and the unjust, where the corn ripens and turns to gold that there may be bread upon the table both of Jew and pagan ; where the stars sparkle above the shepherd's hut as above the prison-house of the assassin ; where the grape swells and matures that it may be transformed into wine for the wedding banquet as well as for the orgies of criminals ; where the blithely singing birds find their food without effort, and thieving foxes find their hiding-place ; where the lilies of the field are more gorgeously arrayed than kings, Jesus discovered the earthly confirmation of His eternal certainty that God is not the master who imposes a thousand years of suffering for a day of happiness, nor the awe-inspiring executioner who decrees the extermination of his enemies, nor yet the monarch who delights to be waited upon by satraps of high

lineage and who keeps close watch upon his servants that they do not disregard the minutest part of that strict ritual which is the etiquette of that regal *curia*, the Temple.

Being His Son, Christ knew that God is the Father—the Father not only of the people of Abraham but of all mankind. A husband's love is strong, but it is jealous and carnal; that of the brother is often tinged with envy; that of the son often rebellious; the affection of a friend is stained with deceit; that of the master is full of proud condescension. Only a father's love for his son is perfect, pure and entirely disinterested. He will do for his son what he would do for no one else. His son is a creation of his own, flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone, a part of himself growing at his side day after day; in him the father sees his own being renewed, perfected, completed. In his son the old man grows young once more; the past is reflected in the future; he who has lived his life sacrifices himself for him who has life still before him; the father lives for his son, delights in him, and is uplifted. When he says 'my son,' he thinks of himself as this child's creator; it was born to him of the woman chosen amongst all others, of this woman's divine pain. For him the father has shed tears, has laboured; he has watched him growing at his feet, by his side; has warmed the small hands between his own; has listened to the infant's first prattle—eternal miracle always new—has seen him taking his first tottering steps across the threshold of his own home. Little by little he has beheld the birth, the expansion and manifestation of a soul in that body which is his own creation, that has come to maturity before his very eyes—the birth of a new human soul, of a treasure that is unique and beyond price. He has seen his own likeness developing gradually in the child's face, and the likeness also of his wife, of the woman with whom he is indivisibly one only in this, the fruit of both—for perfect union in love is achieved only through the child. In the presence of this new being he has called forth, the father feels himself a creator, a benefactor, and he rejoices in his power. As for the son, it is to his father that he looks for everything: in his childhood he places

his whole trust in his father, and feels safe only when at his side. The father knows that he must live for his child, must suffer and toil for him. To the son his father is God on earth—to the father his son is almost divine.

The love of a father contains no trace of a brother's perfunctory sense of obligation, of the envy or selfishness a friend may feel, of the lover's passionate desire, or the feigned devotion of the dependant. The father's love is pure love, the only love that may rightly be called Love. Free from all admixture of elements foreign to its essence, it is the joy of sacrificing self to the happiness of another.

This conception of God as a Father, which is one of the most salient points in Christ's revelation, this profoundly encouraging and sustaining thought that God is our Father, that He loves us with a father's love and not as a monarch loves his slaves ; that He gives to each his daily bread and eagerly welcomes him who has fallen into error when he returns to rest his head upon his Father's breast—this thought that closes the era of the Old Covenant and marks the beginning of the New came to Jesus from Nature. As the Son of God and one with His Father He had always been conscious of this fatherhood, of which the greatest prophets had had but a vague glimpse ; but now that He was sharing every human experience, He saw it reflected, revealed, throughout the universe ; and it is by means of the most beautiful similes drawn from the world of nature that He will one day communicate to mankind the first of His joyful messages.

Like all lofty spirits, Jesus loved the country. The sinner in search of purification, the saint who would pray, the poet who wishes to create, all seek refuge in the hills, in the shade of the trees, beside murmuring waters or among bare crags whereon the sun beats mercilessly. Jesus took His language from the country. He seldom makes use of abstract expressions, and never brings forward any vague, colourless, or too learned conceptions. His speeches, where the colour of the fields and the scent of the gardens are always predominating, He animates with the figures of the domestic animals. In His own country, Galilee,

He had seen the fig swelling and ripening beneath the broad, dark leaves ; the dry vine-branch clothe itself with verdure, and deck itself with white or purple fruit, which gladdens the heart of the gatherer. He has seen the mustard plant springing out from its tiny seed ; He has heard at night the mournful rustling of the wind-rocked reeds. He has seen the grain of corn consigned to the earth whence it will rise again a bursting ear. During the hot days He has seen the gorgeous lilies—red, yellow and purple—standing amidst the tender green of the cornfields. Familiar alike with the gentle and the wild animals, He has seen the dove, a little vain of its glossy neck, cooing out its love on the housetop ; the eagle swooping down upon its prey with widespread wings ; the sparrow of the air whose fate, like that of any king, is in God's hands ; the crows which pick the bones of the dead with their rattling beaks ; the mother-hen gathering her brood beneath her wings at the first signs of storm ; the sly fox hiding its victims in the darkness of its lair ; the dog waiting under its master's table for the scraps and bones. He has also seen the snake writhing in and out among the grasses and the dark-hued viper hiding between the stones of the tombs.

Born among shepherds, He who was destined to become a Shepherd of men knew and loved the sheep—the ewe in search of the stray lamb, the lamb bleating feebly behind its mother, or sucking avidly, half concealed beneath her rich fleece ; the flock nibbling the short grass in the lean and burning pastures of His native hills. With the same love He loved the tiny seed scarcely visible in the palm of one's hand and the old fig-tree that shades the poor man's hut ; the birds of the air that neither sow nor reap, and the silvery fish, glistening in the nets, which will appease one day the hunger of His followers. And looking upwards, on those breathless evenings that are forerunners of storm, He has seen the lightning flash out of the east, cleave the dark sky and disappear in the west.

But not only in the brightly coloured, open writings of Nature did Jesus read He knew that God had spoken

to men through the angels, the patriarchs, and the prophets. His word, His laws, His victories were set forth in the Book. Jesus was familiar with the signs whereby the dead transmit the thoughts and memories of ancient things to the generations yet unborn. He had read only the books wherein His forefathers had told the story of His own people, but He knew their letter and their spirit better than the scribes and the doctors themselves, and this knowledge justified His transformation from the pupil into the Teacher.

IX THE OLD COVENANT

The Jews have been the happiest and the most unhappy of all peoples. Their history is a mystery that begins with the idyll in the Garden of Eden and ends with the tragedy on Golgotha.

Their first parents were moulded by God's own luminous hands and made the masters of Paradise, a river-encompassed land of fertility and eternal summer, where the rich fruits of the East, heavy with lusciousness, hung within easy reach, shaded by their new leaves. The sky, fresh from the Creator's hand, where light had but just begun to shine, whose brilliancy was as yet undimmed by clouds, —the sky, as yet unriven by lightning, unwearied by recurrent sunsets, watched over them with all its stars.

The couple were commanded to love God and each other, and this was the First Covenant. Fatigue and pain were not. Fatigue and pain, death and the fear of death were unknown.

The first act of disobedience brought the first punishment—exile. The man was condemned to labour, and the woman to bear children. Labour is painful, but it has its reward in the harvest. Child-bearing is painful, but it brings children in compensation. Nevertheless these lesser and imperfect conditions of happiness passed rapidly away like leaves devoured by locusts.

For the first time brother slew brother. For the first time human blood was spilled upon the earth, and it became

foul and gave forth the reek of sin. From the union of the daughters of men with demons, giants were born who proved fierce hunters and slayers of men, and who made a hell of the world.

Then the Almighty sent His second punishment. That the earth might be purified in a flood of baptismal waters He sent the Deluge to engulf mankind and his sins. One just man alone was saved, and with him the Almighty made a Second Covenant.

With Noah there began the far-away, happy era of the Patriarchs, of those nomad shepherds, those century-old chiefs, who travelled to and fro from Chaldea to Egypt in search of pastures, wells and peace. They had neither country, houses nor cities. In caravans that stretched out like advancing armies, they carried with them their women, mothers of large families, their sturdy sons, these sons' obedient wives, the innumerable offspring of their offspring, their willing servants, male and female, the bellowing bulls, the cows with swinging udders, the red-coated calves, the evil-smelling rams and he-goats, the towering camels whose colour is that of the soil, the horses with their strong croup, the goats holding high their heads and stamping impatiently, and, carefully hidden away in their saddle-bags, vessels of gold and of silver and their household idols made of metal or stone.

Arrived at their destination they would spread their tents in the neighbourhood of a pool, and the Patriarch, seated in the open, in the shade of oak or sycamore, would contemplate the vast encampment whence rose the smoke of many fires. He would listen to the noise of the bustling activities of the women and the herders, the bellowing and bleating of the cattle, and rejoice in his heart at sight of all these wives, this large family of whom he was the father, of all these flocks that were his, at sight of the progeny of man and of beast increasing prodigiously with each passing year.

At nightfall he would raise his eyes to greet the first evening star that burnt like a white fire above the ridge of the hills, and presently his flowing white beard would

shine in the pale light of the moon which had illumined his night skies for more than a century.

From time to time an angel of the Lord would come and visit him and sit at meat with him before delivering his heavenly message; or the Almighty Himself, under the garb of a pilgrim, would appear in the heat of the day and sit with the old man in the shade of his tent, and they would converse together face to face, like two who had been friends since their youth and had met to discuss their experiences. In his turn the head of the tribe, the master of many servants, himself became the servant to receive the commands and advice, the promises and prophecies of his Divine Master. And between Jehovah and Abraham the Third Covenant was made, which was of a more solemn nature than the others had been.

The son of a Patriarch, sold into slavery by his brothers, waxed mighty in Egypt and summoned his own people to join him there; and the Jews, believing they had found a country of their own at last, increased in numbers and in riches. But they allowed themselves to be corrupted by the Gods of Egypt, whereupon Jehovah sent the third punishment. The Egyptians, envious of the Jews' prosperity, reduced them to poverty and slavery. That the punishment might last longer the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, but finally raised up a second saviour, who led them forth from the torments and the mud of Egypt.

Their trials, however, were not over. For forty years they wandered in the desert, a cloud of smoke going before them by day and a column of fire by night. The Lord had promised them a wonderful country, rich in grass and in water, shaded by the vine and olive; but meanwhile they suffered, for they had neither water to drink nor bread to eat, and they longed for the onions and the gods of Egypt. Then the Almighty caused water to gush forth from the rock and manna and quails to fall from heaven, but the weary and anxious Jews betrayed their Lord and, setting up a calf of gold, fell on their knees and worshipped it. Moses, like all prophets, solemn, like all redeemers, misunderstood by his own people, like all discoverers of new

lands, followed with reluctance, laboriously dragging forward this restive, rebellious multitude, prayed to God to call him to his final rest. But Jehovah was determined, at any cost, to make the Fourth Covenant with His people, and Moses came down from the cloud-encompassed, thunder-shaken mountain bearing in his hands two tables of stone whereon God's own finger had traced the Ten Commandments.

Moses was destined never to enter the Promised Land, the new Eden to be reconquered in place of the old. But the divine pledge was maintained, for Joshua and the other heroes crossed the Jordan, entered into the land of Canaan, and subjugated its inhabitants; cities fell at the mere sound of the trumpets; Deborah sang her song of triumph. The Jews bore with them the God of Battles, concealed by curtains, upon a cart drawn by oxen. The enemy, however, were numerous and determined not to make way for the new-comers. The Jews wandered here and there, at once shepherds and brigands, victorious always when they obeyed the Law, vanquished ever when disregarding it.

A giant with unshorn mane, slew, unaided, thousands of Philistines and Amalekites, but a woman betrayed him; his enemies tore out his eyes and set him to turn the grindstone of a mill. Heroes alone, however, did not suffice; there was need of kings as well. A youth of the tribe of Benjamin, tall and well built, while searching for his father's asses that had wandered away, met a prophet who anointed his head with the sacred oil and made him king over the entire race. Saul, who had become a mighty warrior, conquered the Ammonites and Amalekites and set up a military kingdom that struck fear to the hearts of all his neighbours. But the very prophet who had made him a king became incensed against him and raised up a rival to combat him.

David the shepherd-boy slew the giant who was the king's enemy, soothing the sovereign's angry tempers with the music of his harp, found favour with Saul's eldest son, wedded his daughter, and became one of his captains. But Saul, who was suspicious and half-frenzied, determined

to slay him. David hid in the mountain caverns, and, becoming a chief of brigands, lent his services to the Philistines, and when they had conquered and slain Saul upon the heights of Gilboa, he in his turn became king and ruled over all Israel. This bold shepherd, who was a great poet and a great king, but cruel and licentious withal, set up his house in Jerusalem, and with the help of his Ghibborim, or braves, conquered and subdued the neighbouring princes. For the first time Israel was feared. Henceforth for many centuries, however, the nation was destined to yearn for David's return, to place their hope in the advent of a descendant of his house who would deliver them from servitude.

David was the king of the sword and of song; Solomon was the king of gold and of wisdom. Tributes of gold were paid to him, and with gold he adorned the first sumptuous house of Jehovah. He despatched ships to distant Ophir in search of gold, and the Queen of Sheba laid bags of gold at his feet. But all the splendours of Solomon's gold and all his wisdom could not save him from impurity and his kingdom from ruin. He wedded with stranger women and worshipped strange gods. Mindful of his youth the Lord forgave the sins of his old age, but at his death the kingdom was immediately divided and a dark era of shameful decadence began. Conspiracies in the palace, regicide, rebellion among the leaders, civil wars, defeat, times of shameless idolatry followed by short-lived repentance, filled the period of the Separation. Prophets raised their voices in warning, but the kings either ignored or banished them. Once more the enemies of Israel waxed strong; one after the other the Phœnicians, the Egyptians, the Assyrians and the Babylonians invaded the two kingdoms, extorted tributes of money, and finally, nearly six centuries before the birth of Jesus, Jerusalem and the Temple of Jehovah were destroyed and the Jews led away into slavery on the banks of the river of Babylon. The measure of their unfaithfulness and of their sins was full, and the same God who had delivered them from the Egyptian bondage now made them the slaves of the

Babylonians. This is the fourth punishment, the most terrible of all, for it was destined to endure for ever. The children of Israel will henceforth remain eternally scattered among strangers and subject to the rule of strangers. Some few returned and rebuilt Jerusalem and its Temple ; but the country was invaded by the Scythians, made subject to the Persians, conquered by the Greeks, and finally, after the last exploits of the Maccabeans, delivered into the hands of a dynasty of barbarous Arabs, themselves subject to Rome.

This people, who for centuries had lived free and prosperous in the desert, who had at one time ruled kingdoms and felt strong under the protection of their God, this first people of the earth, now reduced in numbers and languishing under the burden laid upon them by strangers, came gradually to be despised by all—a very Job among nations. After the death of Jesus their fate will become still harder. Jerusalem will suffer destruction a second time ; the Greek and Roman will hold sway in the devastated provinces, and the last fragments of Israel will be scattered throughout the earth like dust carried before the wind.

Never were a people so beloved by their God nor so terribly punished. Elected to be first among the nations, the Jews became the slaves of slaves. They had dreamed of a victorious country of their own, and instead they were reduced to slavery and exile in foreign lands.

Although they were a pastoral rather than a warlike people, they were never at peace with themselves nor with others. They strove against their neighbours, their guests, their princes, their prophets, and their God Himself. Rotten with wickedness, governed by murderers, traitors, adulterers and brigands, by men who were guilty of simony and idolatry, the most holy saints of the East were nevertheless born among them, born of their women—hermits and prophets, just men, men who raised their voices in warning. And finally of this people was born the father of the new saints, He whose advent all the prophets had foretold.

This people ignorant of metaphysics and science, who

had no music, sculpture, painting, nor architecture of their own, nevertheless created the greatest poetry of antiquity, poetry that glowed sublimely in the Psalms and the Prophecies, was infinitely tender in the stories of Joseph and of Ruth, was hot with passion in the Song of Songs.

This people, who had grown up in the midst of those who worshipped savage local gods, attained to the love of the Father, of the one universal God; this people, avid of gold and of lands, could boast that their prophets had been the first defenders of the poor, and they even reached the point of denouncing riches. This same people, who had sacrificed human victims upon their altars and put whole cities to the sword, gave His disciples to Him who would preach the love of our enemies. This people, jealous of their jealous God, were ever ready to forsake Him and follow strange gods, and of their Temple, thrice destroyed and rebuilt, there remains to-day but a ruined wall, barely broad enough to allow a line of mourners to press their foreheads against it and hide their tears.

But this paradoxical and enigmatical people, at once superhuman and abject, the first and the last, the happiest and the most wretched of all, although they are now the servants of other races, still hold sway over the nations by means of their wealth and eloquence. Although they have been without a country for centuries, they nevertheless have a hand in the government of all countries; this people, who murdered the greatest among their offspring, have, by the spilling of that blood, divided the history of the world into two separate parts, and the descendants of those deicides have become at once the most infamous and the most sacred of races.

X THE PROPHETS

No people have ever received more warnings than the Jews. From the dawn of their temporal power until its dismemberment, throughout the era of their victorious kings, from the sad period of exile and slavery to the dark days of the dispersion of their race, no people have ever

had so many messengers to stimulate and admonish them.

India had her ascetics who hid away in the forests that they might subdue the flesh and merge the spirit in the infinite; China had her gracious wise men, those placid grandsires, who taught civic morality to peasant and emperor alike; Greece had her philosophers who, in the shade of graceful porticoes, developed harmonious systems and dug dialectical pitfalls; Rome had her lawgivers who engraved on bronze, for all time and for all generations, those rules for the highest form of justice to which a code can attain; the Middle Ages had their preachers who strove to arouse sleepy Christianity by reminding it of the Passion and of the terrors of hell. The Jewish people had their prophets.

The prophet is no fortune-teller who, seated upon a tripod within his gloomy cave, froths at the mouth and pours out a torrent of words. He tells of the future indeed, but not of the future alone. He speaks of things to come, but he also dwells on the past. Master of time in its three divisions, he explains the past, throws light on the present, utters words of warning concerning the future.

The Hebrew prophet is a voice that cries aloud, a hand that writes. A voice heard in the palaces of kings and in the mountain caves; upon the threshold of the Temple and in the city's public places; a voice that prays, a prayer that threatens, a threat overflowing with divine hope. His heart is oppressed with sadness, his mouth is full of censure, his arm is stretched out to point at punishment. He suffers for his people, and because he loves them he inveighs against them, threatens them, that they may be induced to mend their ways. Besides that of slaughter and fire he preaches the gospel of resurrection and of life, of victory and beautitude, the kingdom of the new David and the Covenant that shall endure for ever.

The prophet brings idolaters back to the true God, exhorts traitors to remember their oath, the cruel to perform acts of charity, the corrupt to become pure, the violent to calm their passions, kings to be just, the

rebellious to submit, sinners to repent, and the proud to become meek. He goes before the king to reprimand him, he mortifies the plebeians, admonishes the priests and rebukes the rich. To the needy he promises consolation ; to those in affliction relief from suffering ; to the sick, health ; to slaves, freedom ; to the people in their humiliation, the coming of the Conqueror.

He is neither king, prince, priest, nor scribe ; he is a mere man without defence or riches, without honours or followers. He is a solitary voice that makes itself heard ; an eager voice that laments ; a mighty voice that cries aloud and puts to shame his listeners ; a voice exhorting to repentance, promising eternity.

Nor is the prophet a philosopher. Little does he care whether the world is made of fire and water, if fire and water be not sufficient to purify the soul of man ; he is a poet indeed, but unintentionally and unconsciously, when the fullness of his wrath and the splendour of his dreams place powerful images in his mouth, such as no masters of rhetoric will ever be able to invent. He is not a priest, for he has never been anointed in the Temple by the mercenary guardians of the Ark ; he is not a king, for he commands no army and because his only weapon is his eloquence which comes to him from on high. He is not a soldier, although he is ready to give his life for his God and his people.

The prophet is a voice speaking in God's name ; a hand writing under God's guidance ; a messenger sent by God to warn those who have lost their way, those who have disregarded the Covenant and failed to keep good watch. He is God's secretary, interpreter and ambassador, and, as such, greater than the king who does not obey the Lord, than the priest who misinterprets His word, than the philosopher who denies His existence, than the people who have forsaken Him to follow after false gods of wood or stone.

The prophet is one who sees with a troubled heart but with a clear eye the evil that prevails to-day, the punishment that will come to-morrow, the reign of happiness that will follow punishment and repentance. He is the

voice of him who cannot speak, of him who cannot write, the defender of the scattered and suffering people, the champion of the poor, the avenger of the humble who groan beneath the heel of the mighty. He is not on the side of the tyrant, but on that of the victim ; he does not walk with the well-fed and the prosperous, but with the hungry and destitute.

The prophet is a querulous, importunate, insistent voice ; he is hated by those holding high rank, viewed with aversion by the masses, and not always understood even by his own disciples. Like a wild animal that scents its prey from afar, like a crow that caws ever on the same note, like a wolf howling hungrily amongst the hills, the prophet treads the ways of Israel, followed ever by suspicion and curses. The needy and oppressed alone bless him in their hearts, but the needy are weak and the oppressed can but listen in silence to his words.

Like all who trouble the sleeper's repose and disturb the tyrant's shameful peace, he is avoided as were he a leper and persecuted as were he an enemy. Kings barely tolerate him ; priests are hostile to him ; the rich hate him.

Elijah must fly before the wrath of Jezebel ; Amos is banished from Israel by Amaziah, priest of Bethel ; Uriah is slain by the sword of King Jehoiakim ; Isaiah falls a victim to Manasseh ; Zechariah has his throat cut between the door of the Temple and the altar ; Jonah is cast into the sea, and the sword whereby John shall suffer decapitation and the Cross whereon Jesus shall hang are ready. The prophet is an accuser, but men will not confess their guilt ; he is an interceder, but those who are blind will not grasp the hand of him who sees ; he is a messenger, but the deaf do not hear his promises ; he is a saviour, but those who are dying in corruption delight in their impurity and refuse to be saved. But the prophet's word will bear eternal testimony in favour of the people who, although they exterminated them, had nevertheless engendered them ; and the death of a Prophet greater than all others will suffice to expiate the crimes of all the peoples who wallow in the world's mire.

XI HE WHO WILL COME

In His home at Nazareth Jesus pondered the injunctions of the Law, but only through the fiery language and the lamentations of the prophets was His fate revealed to Him. Their promises are as insistent as blows upon a door which no one comes to open; they are oft repeated, reaffirmed, reiterated, never contradicted or revoked. Awful in their precision, frightful in their detail, they are pages of history foretold, they are irrefutable proofs.

When at thirty Jesus revealed Himself before men as the Son of Man, He was aware of all that would befall Him, even to the minutest particulars. The events of each day stood chronicled in pages that were composed before He came into the world.

He was aware that the Almighty had promised Moses a new prophet: 'I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.' For God will make a new covenant with His people. '. . . I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers. . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it . . . for I will forgive their iniquity and their sin will I remember no more.' A vague covenant of the spirit and not one graven on stone; a covenant of pardon and not of punishment. And the Messiah will have a precursor to proclaim His coming: 'Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.' 'For unto us a child is born,' Isaiah cries, '. . . and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.'

But the people will be blind to Him and will not heed His word: 'Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed.' 'And he shall be

. . . for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.' He will not seek self-aggrandizement and pomp ; He will not come as a proud conqueror : 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold thy king cometh unto thee : he is just, and having salvation ; lowly and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt, the foal of an ass.'

He will bring justice and relief to the suffering : 'The spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound . . . to comfort all that mourn.' 'The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord . . . and the poor among men shall rejoice. . . . For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all they that watch for iniquity are cut off.' 'Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. . . . Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.' 'I the Lord have called thee in righteousness . . . to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.' But He will be reviled and tortured by those very beings He is come to save. 'He hath no form nor comeliness ; and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; and we hid as it were our faces from him ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth ; he was brought as a lamb

to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he opened not his mouth . . . he was cut off out of the land of the living : for the transgression of my people was he stricken. . . . Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him ; he hath put him to grief ; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul . . . by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many ; and he shall bear their iniquities.' Nor will He seek to avoid the grossest insults. ' I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair ; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.' Every man's hand will be against Him at the supreme hour. ' And they have spoken against me with false tongues ; they compassed me about also with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. For the love that I had unto them, lo, they take now my contrary part. . . . Thus have they rewarded me evil for good : and hatred for my goodwill.' ' Thou hast known my reproof, my shame, and my dishonour,' the Son cries out to His Father. ' I looked for some to have pity on me, but there was no man, neither found I any to comfort me. They gave me gall to eat, and when I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink.'

And finally they will nail Him to the Cross and cast lots for His garments : ' For many dogs are come about me : and the council of the wicked layeth siege against me. They pierced my hands and my feet . . . they stand staring and looking upon me. They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture.' They will realize what they have done when it is too late. ' . . . and they shall look unto me whom they have pierced : and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.'

' All kings shall fall down before him ; all nations shall do him service. For he shall deliver the poor when he crieth . . . and shall preserve the souls of the poor.' ' And the sons of them also that afflicted thee shall come

bending unto thee ; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet.' ' For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people ; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see ; all they gather themselves together ; they come to thee ; thy sons shall come from far and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.' ' Behold I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples . . . and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God.'

All of these words and many another as well does Jesus recall on the eve of setting out on His mission. He knows all, accepts all. He is acquainted with His ultimate fate ; knows the ingratitude of the heart of man, how deaf even His friends will be to His message ; knows how the mighty will hate Him, how He will be scourged, spat upon, insulted, mocked, despised and outraged. He knows that His hands and His feet will be pierced with nails, that He will suffer all things, even death itself ; He knows all that the Man of Sorrows is destined to go through, but He does not flinch.

He knows that the Jews, who are lustful, material, worldly-minded, who have suffered many humiliations, whose hearts are full of bitterness and their minds of evil thoughts, are not looking for a poor, despised and meek Messiah. All but the seers and His own precursor dream of a worldly Messiah, of a king in armour, a second David, a warrior who shall subdue their enemies, shall cause red blood to flow, the red blood of their foes, and raise the palace and the temple of Solomon to even greater splendour than they had known before ; a king to whom all others shall pay tribute, not of love and veneration, but of massive gold and coins of silver. And this earthly monarch, the master of this world, will, they believe, wreak vengeance upon all the enemies of Israel ; upon those who have caused her suffering, upon those who held her children in bondage ; and the slaves shall become masters and the

oppressors shall be their servants; and Jerusalem shall be the capital of all the countries of the earth; and crowned kings shall kneel before the throne of the new king of Israel; and Israel's fields shall be more fertile than any others, and her cattle shall multiply prodigiously, and the heads of corn and of barley shall be fuller than ever before, and two men will stagger under the weight of a single bunch of grapes; and there will not be skins enough to hold the new wine nor enough jars for the oil; and honey will be found in all the hollow trees and in the hedgerows; and the branches will break with the weight of the fruit, which will be luscious and sweet as never before.

That is what the Jews expected—the lustful, materialistic Jews by whom Jesus was surrounded. And He knew well that He could not fulfil their expectations; that He would never be the victorious warrior, the proud king towering above all others, who would bend the knee before Him. He knew that His kingdom was not of this world, and that all He had to offer was a crust of bread, His heart's blood, His love. And they would never believe in Him, but would torture Him and do Him to death for a cheat and a forger. All this He knew as if He had beheld it with His own eyes and suffered it in His flesh and in His spirit. But He knew also that the seed of His word, scattered upon the earth amidst the thistles and the thorns, trampled under the foot by assassins, would sprout, nevertheless, with the first breath of spring; would germinate slowly at first, growing like a bush that is thrashed about by the wind, but would finally become a mighty tree whose branches would cover the whole earth and in whose shade all earth's inhabitants might rest and recall the death of Him who planted it.

XII THE FIERY PROPHET

While Jesus was still handling boards and the carpenter's square in the workshop at Nazareth a voice was raised in the desert, over towards the Jordan and the Dead Sea.

John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, summoned

the Jews to do penance ; he came to announce the approach of the Kingdom of Heaven, to foretell the speedy advent of the Messiah, to admonish the sinners who came to him and to wash them in the waters of the river, that this outward bodily cleansing might serve, in a way, as the beginning of the inner purification.

In this troubled era of Herod's rule, old Judea, profaned by the Idumean usurpers, contaminated by Greek infiltrations, harassed by the Roman soldiery, without a king, devoid of glory, disunited, with half her people already scattered throughout the earth, betrayed by her own priests, still embittered by the cessation, a thousand years before, of her temporal greatness, looking obstinately forward to the mighty revenge, to the return of victory, to the triumph of her God, to the coming of a Liberator who should reign over a new Jerusalem stronger and more beautiful than that of Solomon, and thence dominate the world, despoil every other monarch and bring happiness to his own people and to all men—this old Judea, dissatisfied with her masters, oppressed by the publican, harassed by mercenary Scribes and sanctimonious Pharisees —this old Judea, divided, humiliated, despoiled, but still, in spite of all these shameful circumstances, full of faith in the future, lent a willing ear to the voice in the desert, and assembled on the banks of the Jordan.

The figure of John was well calculated to fire the imagination. The offspring of aged parents, the result of a miracle, he had been set apart from his birth to be *Nazir*, that is to say, pure. He had never shaved his head, never tasted wine or any other intoxicating beverage, had had no intercourse with any woman, had known no other love save that of God.

At an early age he had left the home of his venerable progenitors and gone into the desert, where for years he had lived alone, without house, tent or servant, possessing nothing save the garments he wore. Wrapped in the skin of a camel that was held in place by a leathern belt, tall, gaunt, bronzed and scorched by the sun, with a hairy breast, flowing tresses, piercing eyes flashing beneath shaggy

eyebrows, and a long beard that covered more than half of his face, his hidden mouth poured forth words of terrible malediction.

This wild being, endowed with magnetic powers, and as solitary as a *yogin*, who regarded all pleasures with the aloofness of a Stoic, represented, in the eyes of those who received his baptism, the last hope of a despairing people.

John, his body seared by the desert sun, his soul seared by his longing for the coming of the Kingdom, is the prophet of Fire. In the Messiah who is about to appear, he sees the Master of the flames. The new king will be a fierce peasant. 'Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.' 'He will . . . gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.'

Uncompromising, aggressive, impatient and persistent, John is not tender in his handling of those who approach him, although he may glory in the fact that he has attracted them to him. And when Pharisees and Sadducees come to him for baptism, men of position, versed in the Scriptures, respected by the people and possessed of authority in the Temple, he humiliates them more cruelly than the rest.

'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.'

You who hide yourselves in your houses of stone as vipers hide beneath rocks, you Pharisees and Sadducees, are harder than stone; your intellect has petrified in the ritual and in the letter of the law; your selfish hearts are hardened; you have bestowed a stone upon one who was hungry and asked for bread; you have hurled stones at one whose sins were less grievous than your own. You, Pharisees and Sadducees, are but proud statues of stone which only fire may overcome, since water does but flow over you and leave you dry. But the God who, with

His own hands, fashioned Adam out of clay has the power to fashion other men, other living beings, other children for Himself out of the pebbles of the river-bed, or the stones of the roadway and the rocks of the mountain peaks. He will change stone into flesh and spirit, whereas you have changed flesh and spirit into stone. It is not enough, therefore, that you bathe in Jordan. It is good to cleanse oneself outwardly, but that is only a beginning. Go, and do in all things the opposite of all you have done heretofore ; if not, you will be reduced to ashes by Him who will baptize with Fire.

Then they questioned him, saying :—

'What shall we do then ? He answered and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none ; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him : Master, what shall we do ? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him saying : And what shall we do ? And he said unto them : Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely : and be content with your wages.'

John, who is so grand, sublime indeed, when predicting the terrible choice between the good and the wicked, becomes almost commonplace when he has to deal with practical detail, and falls in, one might even say, with the pharisaical tradition. He can only recommend charity—the giving away of what is superfluous, of what one can do without. Of the publicans he demands only that they be strictly just. Let them exact only what has been appointed and nothing more. To use discretion, to be content with their wages and not to steal is his advice to the soldiers, who are a violent, thieving lot. We have gone back to what is purely Mosaic ; long before John's time, Amos and Isaiah had progressed farther.

It was time for the *Denouncer* from the shores of the Dead Sea to make way for the *Liberator* from the banks of the Lake of Tiberias.

The way of all precursors is hard. They know, but

they will never see ; they may reach the banks of Jordan, but they will never enter the Promised Land ; they smooth the path for one who walks behind them, but who will presently overtake them ; they prepare the throne upon which they will never sit ; they are the servants of a master whose face they have perhaps never seen. John's fierceness may indeed find a certain justification in the fact that he knew himself to be but a simple ambassador and nothing more. This knowledge indeed did not arouse envy in his soul, but it nevertheless tinged his very humility with a sense of sadness.

They came from Jerusalem to ask him who he was.

'And he confessed and denied not ; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then ? Art thou Elias ? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet ? And he answered, No . . . I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. . . . But there standeth One among you, whom ye know not. He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.'

Meanwhile, at Nazareth, an obscure Labourer was preparing to buckle on His sandals with His own hands and go forth into the desert, where the voice re-echoed that had thrice answered, 'No !'

XIII ON THE THRESHOLD

John exhorted sinners to bathe in the river before performing their acts of penance. Jesus came to John to receive baptism. Does He hereby acknowledge Himself a sinner ?

The texts are clear. The Prophet preached 'the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.' All who went to him acknowledged themselves to be sinners ; those who wash indeed feel that they are not clean.

The fact that nothing is known concerning the life of Jesus between His twelfth and His thirtieth year—the very years when passionate and imaginative youth is most easily led astray—has suggested to some that during this

period He was, or at least had believed Himself to be, a sinner like all men.

What we know of the three years of life which still remained to Him (of those years whereon the Four Witnesses have thrown the strongest light, for one always recalls most distinctly the last days and the last utterances of the dead) conveys to us no hint of an interval of guilt between the initial innocence and the final glory.

In Christ the appearance even of a conversion is impossible. His first words and His last are spoken with the same accents; from the very beginning, the source whence they flow is limpid, it contains no sign of muddy depths, no stratum of impure sediment. From the first He is sure of Himself, outspoken, absolute. He speaks with the unmistakable authority of purity. His voice is strong, free and clear; it rings out harmoniously unveiled either by the foul wine of indulgence or by the tears of repentance. The brightness of His glance and smile and the lucidity of His thought have nothing of the clearness that follows the storm when the clouds have passed away, nor of the dim and uncertain light of dawn slowly conquering the shadows of night. His is the clearness of one who, born but once, even in manhood has remained a child; the lucidity, the transparency, the serene peace of a day which will end in night indeed, but will know no shadow before evening; the clearness of an eternal, untroubled day, of a childhood that shall endure until death.

He walks among the impure with the natural simplicity of the pure; among sinners with the natural strength of innocence; among the sick with the natural boldness of health.

A convert hides always some uneasiness at the bottom of his soul. A single drop of bitterness, the faintest shadow of uncleanliness, the slightest tinge of regret, the lightest passing breath of temptation will suffice to reawaken his anxiety. He is fearful ever lest he have not rid himself of the last trace of the old Adam, lest he have not really destroyed the other being who once dwelt within

him, but only reduced it to insensibility. He has paid so dearly for his salvation, borne so much, and suffered so acutely; it seems to him a treasure at once so precious and so fragile that he lives in perpetual dread of exposing it to danger, of losing it. He does not avoid sinners, but approaches them with an instinctive sense of repugnance; with the fear, frequently unrecognized even by himself, of a fresh contagion; with terror lest the sight of the impurity in which he himself once delighted may awaken in him an intolerable sense of his own shame and imperil his salvation. The servant who becomes a master is never at his ease with servants; he who has once been poor, on growing rich is seldom generous with the poor; after his conversion, he who was once a sinner is not always indulgent to sinners. The remnant of pride which always lies at the bottom of the heart, even of a saint, lends their pity a faint tinge of contempt. Why do not these others do what they themselves have done? The upward path is open to all, even to the most degraded, the most hardened. The prize to be won is of great value. Why do they still remain in the depths of darkness?

And when one who has himself been converted seeks to convert his brothers, he can never refrain from citing his own experience, bringing forward his fall and his deliverance, and this with no motive of pride, perhaps, but merely to encourage. The convert offers himself as a living example of grace received, of the joy that righteousness brings.

We may deny the past, but we cannot destroy it; it rises to the surface in those who, even though they be unconscious of its presence, start a new life after the second birth through repentance.

In Jesus this supposed past of the convert never shows itself in any way. Never does it make itself felt by any allusion, in any slightest action or in the obscurest of His words. His love for the sinner has nothing of the fervid tenacity of the repentant who would bring others to repentance. His love is part of His nature; it is not inspired by a sense of duty. A fraternal and spontaneous

tenderness, it contains no reproach; it is the loving-kindness of a friend who feels no repugnance; it is the attraction towards the impure experienced by Him who knows He can purify. Disinterested love; Love of the saints in the hours of supreme holiness; Love that makes all other love appear vulgar; Love unknown before Him; Love which has reappeared now and again in memory and in imitation of Him; the Love we call *Christian*, and never by any other name. Divine love—the Love of Jesus—LOVE.

Jesus came to live with sinners, but He was not a sinner. He came into John's presence to bathe in the running waters, but He was stainless.

The soul of Jesus was that of a child; so childlike as to surpass the wise in wisdom, the saints in holiness. He ignores the Puritan austerity. He ignores the terror of him who has escaped from drowning. To some, sin lies in the lightest imperfection; in the involuntary neglect of one even of the six hundred points of the law. But Jesus was neither a Pharisee nor a fanatic. He discerned the evil from the good, and never lost sight of the spirit in the labyrinth of the letter. He knew life well; He accepted life not as happiness itself, but as one of the conditions of happiness. To eat and drink was no sin. There was no sin either in enjoying life, in bestowing a glance of compassion on the thief who flies from pursuit, or upon the woman who stains her lips with carmine in order to hide the traces of unsought kisses.

And yet Jesus did come with the throng of sinners who sought purification in the waters of Jordan. The mystery of this is no mystery to him who sees in the rite which John had restored something more than its generally accepted significance.

The case of Jesus was unique. His baptism, which apparently did not differ from any other baptism, was made necessary by reasons of another order. Baptism is not only the act of cleansing the flesh, as a symbol of the desire to cleanse the soul; according to the primitive analogy of the water having power to remove material

as well as spiritual stain, this physical metaphor, which finds its use in the generally accepted symbol, this ceremony indispensable to those who, in order to believe in the immaterial, had need of a tangible, material support for their faith, was not made for Jesus.

He went to the Jordan that His precursor's prophecy might be fulfilled ; by kneeling before the Prophet of Fire, He recognized him as a true ambassador who, his duty being done, may now regard his mission as ended. Jesus, by submitting to this symbolical investiture, was really confirming John in his rôle of precursor.

Who wishes to give another meaning to Jesus' baptism may remember also that immersion in water is a survival of the human sacrifice. For centuries the peoples of antiquity had the custom of immolating their enemies or even their own brothers to the Divine wrath, in expiation of some grave offence or in order to obtain some exceptional grace, or even salvation when all hope seemed lost. The Jews dedicated the lives of their first-born to Jehovah. In the time of Abraham God Himself commanded that this practice be abolished, but His orders did not always meet with obedience.

The victims suffered death by various methods, one of which was drowning. At Kyrenia in Cyprus, at Terracina and Marseilles within the memory of history, a man was flung into the sea every year, the victim being regarded as the saviour of his fellow-citizens. Baptism is a survival of the practice of drowning for ritualistic purposes, and as this propitiatory offering to the water was held to be advantageous to them who performed the sacrifice and meritorious on the part of the victim, it was but natural that it should come to be regarded as the beginning of a new life, of a resurrection. He whom the waters engulf is worthy to live again. Baptism, even after its cruel origin had been forgotten, remained a symbol of rebirth.

Jesus was about to enter on a new period of His life, on His true life . By His immersion He attested His willingness to die, and at the same time the certainty of His resurrection. He did not enter the river to cleanse

Himself, but to signify that He was entering now upon His second life, and that His death will be in appearance only, as was also His purification by the waters of Jordan.

XIV THE DESERT

Immediately after His baptism, Jesus went into the desert. He leaves the multitude for solitude.

Until then He had spent His life among the fields of Galilee and the meadows on the banks of the Jordan; He now withdraws to the arid hills, the country where there are no springs of water, where the corn does not grow, where only reptiles and the thorn flourish.

Until then He had dwelt among the labourers of Nazareth and with John's penitents; now He seeks the lonely hills where he will see no face and hear no human voice. Between Himself and humanity the New Man places the Desert.

He who said, 'Woe unto him who is alone,' spoke out of his own dread only. To frequent the society of men is a sacrifice whose worth is in proportion to the repugnance one experiences. Solitude to them whose souls are rich is no expiation but a reward. It is a foretaste of happiness, a time for developing beauty within ourselves, a time that reconciles us with the absent. Only in solitude do we live in the company of our equals, with those who conceived the lofty thoughts that console us for the loss of all earthly happiness.

Solitude is indeed unbearable to the commonplace soul, the narrow-minded; to him who has nothing to offer, who fears himself and his own emptiness; to him who is condemned to dwell in the eternal solitude of his own spirit, in that inner desert where only the poisonous weeds of untilled tracts can flourish. Solitude is also impossible to the restless, who are oppressed and disheartened when the opportunity is denied them to forget themselves in the company of others, to listen to the perpetual talk of others, and share their illusions, and who cannot live without mingling daily with the sordid crowds of the street.

Jesus had lived among men, and He will return to them

because of His love for them. But in days to come He will often hide Himself, even from His disciples, that He may be alone for a time. In order to love men it is necessary, from time to time, to dwell apart.

It is when we are far from them that we are being drawn ever more closely to them. He of the puny soul remembers only the evil that has been done to him; his nights are troubled with resentment, and the bitterness of anger is in his mouth. Whereas a generous nature remembers what is good only, and out of gratitude for a few kind actions forgets all the evil he may have suffered. Even the wrongs he may not as yet have forgiven vanish now from his memory, and on returning to dwell among his brothers he loves them as he did in the beginning.

For Jesus these forty days of solitude were a final preparation. For forty years the Children of Israel—prophetically symbolical of Jesus—had wandered in the desert before entering into the land the Almighty had promised them; for forty days Moses dwelt with the Lord, receiving His commands; for forty days Elijah wandered in solitary places to escape from the wrath of a wicked queen.

And in like manner the new Liberator waited also forty days before proclaiming His promised land, dwelling with God for forty days in order to receive His final inspiration. He will not be left alone, for the wild animals and the angels will surround Him—beings inferior and beings superior to man; those who are all matter and those who are all spirit.

Man is an animal that must become an angel; he is matter in process of transformation into spirit. When the animal prevails he sinks lower than the beasts, for he places what remains of his intellect at the service of bestiality. If the angel prevail, man becomes his equal and, instead of being only a simple soldier of the Lord, has his share in what is Divine. But the fallen angel, condemned to assume the shape of an animal, is the persistent and determined enemy of all who tend to soar to those heights whence he himself has been cast down.

Jesus is the enemy of the world, the enemy of its brutal and sensual life. He came to convert brutes into men, and men into angels. He is born to change and conquer the world . . . to combat the world's master . . . the enemy of God and man, the malignant, tempting, suborning spirit. He is born to drive Satan from the earth as His Father had driven him from Heaven.

And at the close of the forty days Satan appears in person to tempt his enemy.

The daily need to satisfy our craving for food is the first proof of our subjection to matter, and Jesus was determined to overcome matter. When among men He will eat and drink that they may not be ashamed, and not only because it is right to give to the flesh what is due to the flesh, but also as an open protest against the hypocritical abstinencies of the Pharisees. Jesus brought His mission to a close by a supper, but He entered upon it by a period of fasting. While alone in the desert He neglects food, for there He need not fear either to humiliate His simple companions by His abstinence, or be mistaken for a Pharisee.

But at the end of the forty days the pangs of hunger assailed Him. Satan, in wait and invisible, was expecting this moment. When matter feels the want of matter Satan may hope. It was then the enemy spoke :—

'If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.'

The retort is ready :—

'It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'

Satan does not acknowledge himself beaten. From the top of a high mountain he points out to Jesus the kingdoms of the earth, saying :—

'. . . All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them ; for that is delivered unto me ; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.'

Jesus answered :—

'Get thee behind me, Satan ; for it is written. Thou

shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'

Then Satan takes Him to Jerusalem and sets Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and said to Him :—

' If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence.'

But Jesus, answering quickly, said :—

' It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'

' And when the devil had ended all the temptation '—says Luke—' he departed from him for a season.'

We shall witness his return and final attack.

At first sight this dialogue appears but a combat whereof the weapons are taken from the texts of the Bible. Satan and Jesus do not use their own words, but take them, each in turn, from the Scriptures. It is almost like listening to a theological disputation ; but in reality it is the first parable of the Gospels, acted rather than spoken.

It is not strange that Satan should have approached Jesus with the absurd hope of expecting Him to fall. Nor is it strange that Jesus' human nature should have been subjected to temptation. Satan tempts only the spiritually great and pure. To others he has no need even to utter a word of invitation ; they belong to him from their very youth, almost before reaching childhood. It costs him no effort to obtain their obedience. They fling themselves into his arms even before he has called them. Most of them do not even notice his existence. He has never stood before them, because they have obeyed him from afar. Having never known him, they are inclined to deny his existence. The diabolical do not believe in the devil. It has been said that the devil's last trick was to spread the report of his own death. He assumes all shapes, sometimes even of beautiful things wherein one would never suspect his presence. The Greeks, for instance—that nation gifted with such extraordinary intelligence and refinement—had no room in their mythology for Satan. But all of their divinities, if one examine them closely, wear the horns of Satan beneath their wreaths of laurel or of grape leaves. We find Satan in the tyrannical and libidinous Jove, in the adulterous Venus, in Apollo the

extortioner, in Mars the murderer, in the drunken Dionysus. So astute were these gods of the Greeks, that they gave the people love potions and showered sweet perfumes upon them that they might not perceive the reek of the evil that was gradually covering the earth.

If, however, the majority of men fail to perceive his presence, and deem him but a ridiculous invention of the Church to induce repentance, it is those who recognize but do not follow him whom he attacks most fiercely. He robs the first two mortals of their innocence ; he leads the mighty David astray ; he corrupts Solomon the Wise and accuses Job the Righteous before the throne of God. All the saints who have hidden in the desert, all who have loved God, were tempted by Satan. The farther we withdraw from him the nearer he presses. The higher we climb, the greater are his efforts to drag us down. He can taint him only who is clean ; to be tempted by Satan is a sign of purity, of grandeur, a proof of ascension. He who has met Satan face to face may hope to work out his own salvation. More than any other, Jesus deserves this consecration. Satan challenges Him twice and makes Him one offer. He bids Him change inanimate matter into life-giving matter, and to cast Himself down from a great height, that God, by saving Him, may recognize Him as His Son. He offers Him the possession and the glory of earthly kingdoms if He will but consent to serve him instead of God. He asks for material bread and a material miracle, and offers material power in return. The challenges Jesus disregards, the offer He refuses.

For He is not the carnal and temporal Messiah the mass of the Jews had expected, the Messiah of matter as, in his own degradation, the Tempter had imagined. He is not come to bring food for the body, but for the soul, that most precious of foods—Truth. When, far from home, His brothers will lack bread, He will divide the few loaves they have, and all will eat to repletion and still there will be baskets full left over. But, save in cases of necessity such as this, He will not distribute the bread that comes from the earth and must return thereunto. Should He

change into bread the stones of the road, all would follow Him for the body's sake and feign to believe in His word. Even the dogs would gather at the banquet. But this He does not want. He who believes in Him must believe in spite of hunger, pain and suffering. He who would follow Him must abandon the fields where the corn ripens, and relinquish the coin that may be bartered for bread. He must go with Jesus unencumbered and unpaid, with no other covering than his tunic, and live like the birds of the air, eating the grains of corn gathered in passing, and begging for alms from door to door. The bread of this world may be dispensed with; a fig hidden among the leaves, a fish caught in the lake can well replace it; but no one can live without the bread of Heaven lest he die for ever, as have died those who never tasted it. Man does not live by bread alone, but by love, by enthusiasm and by truth. Jesus is ready to transform the earthly kingdom into the Kingdom of Heaven, insane bestiality into blessed sanity, but He will not stoop to change a stone into bread, to change one species of matter into another.

Jesus refused Satan's other challenge for reasons of the same nature. Men love the marvellous, the prodigious, they love to see the physical impossibility made possible. They hunger and thirst for the monstrous. They are ready to prostrate themselves before the thaumaturgus, be he the devil's agent or a charlatan. All men will demand a sign from Jesus, meaning an astonishing illusion. But He will always refuse, because it is not His intention to move men by means of the marvellous. He will heal the sick—especially sinners, and such as are sick in spirit—but He will often avoid the necessity of performing even these miracles, and beg those who have been made whole to hide the name of their healer. Men must believe in Him in spite of all contrary evidence; must believe in His greatness even in the darkest hour of His humiliation, in His divinity even when they see His humanity reduced to abjection. To cast Himself down from the pinnacle without benefiting any one thereby and for the sole purpose

of winning men by the fascination of what is prodigious and terrifying; to defy God, to force Him to perform a bold and useless miracle simply that Satan may not win his infamously sarcastic and arrogant wager, that Jesus will not do. He who is all heart will speak to the hearts of men; He who is sublime will uplift; He who is pure spirit will purge the spirits of men; He who is all love will inspire love in others; He whose soul is great will strengthen weak and lonely souls. Instead of casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, He will go from the Temple to the mountain-top and from that summit he will teach the beatitudes of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The offer of earthly kingdoms must fill Him with disgust, and the price demanded by Satan, with a horror greater still. Satan had a right to offer what is his; the kingdoms of the earth are founded upon force and maintained by fraud, and they form his domain and the paradise he has regained. Satan lays his head each night on the pillows of the mighty; they worship him by their works, and pay him his daily tribute by their thoughts and deeds. But had Jesus offered bread without labour to all, had He, like any common mountebank, opened a theatre for the performance of popular miracles, He might easily have wrested their kingdoms from the kings without bending the knee before His adversary. Had He wished to be the Messiah the Jews had dreamt of in their dark, sleepless night of servitude, He could have corrupted them in giving them abundance and showing them marvellous things, converting the earth into a land of delight and enchantment, and immediately the throne of Satan's procurators would have been His.

But Jesus wishes to be neither the restorer of the fallen kingdom nor the conqueror of hostile realms. He cares little for power and still less for glory. The kingdom He proclaims and prepares has nothing in common with the kingdoms of this world. His kingdom is destined to abolish the kingdoms of the earth.

The Kingdom of Heaven is within us; each day with

every soul that is converted, its power is extended because it has acquired another citizen, snatched from the kingdoms of the earth. When all men shall have become virtuous; when we shall all love our fellow-men as fathers love their children; when we shall love even our enemies (if, indeed, enemies then still exist); when no one shall seek to accumulate riches, and instead of taking from others each one shall give bread to him who is hungry, and a cloak to him who is cold; what, in that hour, will become of the kingdoms of the earth? What need of soldiers when no one seeks to extend his own territory at the expense of his neighbour? What need of judges when transformed humanity shall have ceased to know what crime is? What need of kings when his own conscience is become a law unto every man, and there are no longer armies to command and judges to appoint? What need of money and of taxation when every man is sure of his bread and satisfied with it, and there are no wages to be paid either to soldiers or to servants? When the hearts of all shall have altered, those props we call society, country and justice will melt away like the dreams of a troubled night. The word of Christ needs no money, no armies to support it, and when it shall have become the guiding principle in every man, and for all time, all that now binds and blinds humanity —force that is sinful but necessary, and the wicked glory of war—will be swept away as are the mists of morning by the strength of the sun and the rush of the wind. The Kingdom of Heaven that is one, will supplant the kingdoms of the earth that are many. There will no longer be kings and subjects, masters and slaves, rich and poor, sanctimonious sinners and sinners who are cynical. There will no longer be sinners who are crushed by their shame and virtuous beings who glory in their moral superiority, prisoners and men who go free. God's sun will shine on all alike. The citizens of His kingdom will form one family, and the gates of Heaven will again be thrown open to the sons of Adam, who will have become as gods.

When Jesus had overcome Satan within Himself, He came forth out of the desert to conquer him in man.

XV THE RETURN

On returning among men Jesus learned that the Tetrarch, Herodias' second husband, had caused John to be cast into the fortress of Machærus. The voice crying in the desert was now stilled, and the waters of the Jordan no longer reflected the shadow of the wild Baptist. He had played his part, and must now make room for One whose voice was more powerful than his. In the gloom of his dungeon John was awaiting the moment when his head would be carried on a charger of gold to the table spread for the birthday feast, and be placed, a supreme offering, before a treacherous and evil woman.

Jesus was aware that His day had dawned, and, crossing Samaria, He returned into Galilee to proclaim the approach of the new kingdom. He did not go to Jerusalem, for that city of the Great King was the capital, and Jesus was come to destroy this Jerusalem of stone and arrogance, seated proudly upon her hillside, as hard of heart as the very stones of which she was built. Jesus was come to combat those very men who are glorified in all great cities, in all the capitals, in all the Jerusalems of this world.

Jerusalem was the home of the world's mighty; here the Romans, masters of the earth and of Judea, were established with their well-equipped armies. Those in power in Jerusalem were the representatives of the emperors, of the drunken, murderous Tiberius, the successor of the hypocritical Augustus, of the adulterous and profligate Julius.

In Jerusalem dwelt the high priests, those venerable custodians of the Temple; and also the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Scribes, and the Levites with their followers; and all of these were the descendants of those who had driven out and murdered the prophets; they were the men who had turned the law into stone; they were the slaves of the letter, the proud depositaries of arid bigotry.

Jerusalem was the abode of the treasurers of God and of the Cæsars; of the guardians of all treasures; of the

publicans with their tax-collectors and parasites, of the rich with their servants and concubines, of the merchants with their well-stocked warehouses, of the money-lenders transacting their business in the open street, their bags of jingling coins hidden in their bosoms, just over their hearts.

Jesus came as the enemy of every one of these. He came to conquer the masters of the earth—which is common property—and to confound the masters of the Word—which God proclaims wheresoever He willeth ; to condemn the masters of gold—mere matter which is ephemeral and fatal.

He was come to overthrow the rule of Rome's soldiers, who oppressed the bodies of men ; the rule of the priests of the Temple, who oppressed their souls ; the rule of the hoarders of riches, who oppressed the poor. He was come to save the poor and the bodies and souls of men ; to set up liberty against Rome, love against the Temple, poverty against wealth.

Jesus, therefore, would not enter upon His mission in Jerusalem where His enemies were at their strongest. He would surround it, attack it from without, arrive there at a later date with the people behind Him, when the Kingdom of Heaven should have gradually encompassed the city. The conquest of Jerusalem must be the last proof, the mighty battle between One greater than all the prophets and the city that had destroyed the prophets. Had He gone at once to Jerusalem—to Jerusalem where He would one day make His entry as a King and be buried as a malefactor—He would have been immediately seized and prevented from sowing the good seed in less arid and stony soil.

Jerusalem, like all capitals, which are the rallying-places for the scum of the nation, was inhabited by a shameless crowd composed of the frivolous, the luxury-loving, the indolent, the sceptical and the indifferent ; there was also a patrician caste to whom nought was left save the traditional ceremonials of the ritual and the bitterness of decadence ; there was an aristocracy of plutocrats and

speculators belonging to the fold of Mammon, and a rebellious, restless, ignorant mass who lived between the superstitions of the Temple and the dread of the stranger's sword. The soil of Jerusalem was certainly not adapted to the seed Jesus had to sow.

Being a country man, which means that He was healthy and loved solitude, He returned to His own province. He would fain proclaim the happy tidings to those who before all are entitled to hear them—to the poor, the simple, the humble; the message was especially addressed to them, because they had waited longest for it, and would rejoice in it more heartily than any others.

Jesus' mission was especially to the poor; this is why, avoiding Jerusalem, He entered into Galilee, and there began to teach in the synagogue.

Jesus' first words were few and simple; they might indeed have been confounded with words already spoken by John.

'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel.'

Bare words these, and rendered somewhat incomprehensible to the modern mind by the very fact of their simplicity. In order to grasp them, to understand the difference between John's message and that of Jesus, we must adapt them to our language and restore their everlasting significance.

'The time is fulfilled.' The time that had been looked forward to, prophesied, foretold. John had said that a king would soon come to found a new kingdom, that of Heaven. The King was now come, and He began by proclaiming that the gates of Heaven were opened. He was the guide, the way, the helping hand, before becoming the King in all the splendour of celestial glory.

This time is not necessarily the fifteenth year of Tiberius' reign. The time of Jesus is now and for ever, it is eternity, it is the moment of His apparition, of His death, of His return, of His perfect triumph, which even as we write is not yet accomplished. The time is fulfilled at every instant; at any hour it may reach its plenitude if only

the labourers be ready ; every day is His ; His era is not marked off by numbers ; eternity does not involve a beginning or a chronological order. Every time a human being makes an effort to enter the Kingdom and stands forth to confirm its existence, to enrich, defend and strengthen it, to proclaim its perpetual holiness and perennial rights over all lesser and inferior kingdoms, then and always is the time fulfilled. The time when he spoke has come to be called the Era of Jesus, the Christian Era, the Era of the New Covenant. We are separated from it by less than two thousand years, by less than two days, because to God, as to them who know, a thousand years are as a single day. The time is fulfilled ; even to-day we are in the fullness of time. Jesus is still calling us ; the second day is not yet spent ; the foundation of the Kingdom is merely begun. We who are still amongst the living in this present year, in this century (and we shall not always be amongst the living, may perhaps not see the end of the year, and shall certainly not see the close of the century), we, I say, who are still alive and present in the flesh, can have our part in this Kingdom, can enter into it, dwell in it, enjoy it. The Kingdom is not the forgotten dream of a poor Jew who lived twenty centuries ago ; it is not superannuated, it has not become a thing of antiquity, a dead memory, a madness that is past. The Kingdom is of to-day, of to-morrow, of all time, a future reality, a living, actual reality, something that is ours. It is a work recently started, towards whose accomplishment every one may contribute, beginning at once, starting afresh or carrying on labours already begun. The word does not strike us as a new one, and the message indeed seems old, repeated as it has been by the echoes of two thousand years, but the Kingdom, as a fact, in its establishment and accomplishment, is new, fresh, born but yesterday ; it is still growing and still has its blossoms and all its growths before it. Jesus cast the seed upon the ground, but in two thousand of this world's years that have passed like one bleak winter, through sixty generations of human beings, that seed has but sprouted. Is the

present season, that has been ushered in by a deluge of blood, destined to be the longed-for springtide of its expansion ?

What His kingdom is we learn, page by page, from the words of Jesus Himself. But we must not picture it to ourselves as a new paradise of delights, as a tiresome Arcadia, as an immense choir where the blessed sing hymns of praise, their feet resting upon the clouds and their heads among the stars.

In the teachings of Christ the Kingdom of God is set over against that of Satan ; the Kingdom of Heaven is the antithesis of the kingdoms of this world ; the kingdom of Satan is that of evil, fraud, cruelty and pride ; the kingdom of the lower regions. The Kingdom of God signifies, therefore, that of goodness, of sincerity, love and humility. It is the Kingdom of the Heights.

The kingdom of the earth is that of matter and of flesh, of gold and of envy, of avarice and immorality ; the kingdom of all things which a mad and corrupted humanity love.

The Kingdom of Heaven will be its opposite ; it will be of the spirit and of the soul, of renunciation, of purity ; the kingdom of all those treasures which are prized by men who know the nothingness of the others.

God is the Father, which means that He is loving-kindness. Heaven is superior to earth, therefore it is of the Spirit ; Heaven is the dwelling-place of the Almighty ; the spirit is the domain of loving-kindness.

The beast crawls upon the earth, delights in matter ; the saint keeps his eyes raised to Heaven, longs for Heaven, and lives in the hope of dwelling there eternally. Most men are beasts ; but Jesus seeks to make them saints. This is the plain but everlasting meaning of the Kingdom of God and of Heaven.

The Kingdom of God belongs to man. ' The Kingdom of Heaven is within us.' It begins now, it is of our own making and for our own happiness. It is in this life and in this world. Its existence in us depends on our own will, on our accepting or refusing it. When we shall have

become perfect the Kingdom of Heaven will spread over the earth and be established among men.

In fact Jesus adds: 'Repent ye!' Here again the true and splendid meaning of the word has been distorted. The word Mark uses, Μετανοεῖτε, is badly rendered by *pœnitemini* or *repent ye*. Its true meaning is *mutatio mentis*, which signifies the changing of the heart, the transformation of the soul. *Metamorphosis* means a change of form—*metanoia*, a change of spirit. The sense would be rendered better by *conversion*, which means the renewal of the inner man; but the idea conveyed by 'repentance' and 'penance' is already an application of the words of Jesus, a commentary upon them.

The condition for entering the Kingdom of Heaven—and as the very substance of the new order—was, according to Jesus, the complete conversion, the overthrowing of life and of values common to life, the changement of sentiments, judgments, intentions—what He, speaking to Nicodemus, resumes in these words—The 'Second Birth.'

He will explain little by little in what manner this complete transformation of the human soul is to be brought about. His whole life will be devoted to teaching this and to giving the example. Meanwhile, on this first day, His supreme exhortation is: 'Believe the Gospel.'

To our generation the word Gospel means that book wherein the story of Christ is four times told. But Jesus Himself did not write, nor did He intend to allude to any writer's work. By gospel He meant what the word simply and beautifully expresses, literally translated, the 'Good tidings,' but 'Joyous message' renders its significance more faithfully. Jesus is indeed a messenger—Ἄγγελος, an angel—who brings felicity. He brings this joyous news—the sick will be healed, the blind will see, the poor will grow rich, rest will be given to the weary, sinners will receive pardon, and the impure will become clean; the imperfect can become perfect, human Beasts may become Saints, and the Saints Angels, like God Himself.

If the Kingdom is to come, all must believe in the truth of the message, and each one of us must labour to bring

this about. All must believe that the coming of the Kingdom is not merely possible, but is near at hand. If we lack faith in this promise, we shall not do what is necessary in order to see it fulfilled. Only the certainty that the message is not a deception, that the Kingdom is not the lying invention of an adventurer or the hallucination of a madman, only the conviction of the Messenger's honesty and trustworthiness can lead men to put their hands to the great work of the foundation.

Jesus, in these few words so seldom understood, lays down the main principle of His teachings. The fulfilment of time: we must begin without delay. The coming of the Kingdom: the triumph of the spirit over matter, of good over evil, of the saint over the beast. The *Metanoia*: complete transformation of souls. The Gospel: the happy tidings that all this is true and eternally possible.

XVI CAPERNAUM

These things then did Jesus teach to His Galilæans at the doors of their small, white houses, in the shady, open squares of their villages or on the shores of the lake where, towards evening, when the sun was sinking red in the west, warning all that the hour of rest was approaching, He would stand, His feet among the pebbles, leaning against a boat drawn up upon the beach.

Many were those who listened to His teachings and followed Him, for, as Luke tells us: '. . . His word was with power.' His words were not new to all, but the Man was new, and new also were the fervour of His utterances and the sense of comfort they conveyed, arising from His very heart, touching the hearts of others. The sound of those words was new and also the meaning they assumed on His lips and in the light of His countenance. This was no more the Prophet from the hills, crying out in desert places; the inaccessible and solitary hermit who had obliged others to come to him to hear his word. This was a Prophet who dwelt among men like one of themselves; who was every man's friend, the friend even of the

outcast. 'He was a comrade, a companion, who assumed no airs of superiority, who sought out His brethren wherever they might be—at their work, in their homes, or in the busy street; who ate bread and drank wine at their tables, was ready to lend a helping hand with the fishing-nets, and had a gentle word for all, for the downcast, for the sick, or for the beggar.

Simple-minded folk, like children and animals, are instinctively quick to recognize a friend and to trust him. Their faces lightened up with pleasure at his approach and saddened at his departure. At times they cannot depart from him and they follow after him until death.

Jesus spent His days among simple folk, going on foot from one village to another or sitting talking to his friends of early days. He always loved the sunny banks, along the shores of the quiet lake, the uniform comb of water hardly disturbed by the gentle breeze of the desert, where the few silent barks glittered in the far-off distance—so far, so noiseless are they, that at first one would think they have no master. The west coast of the lake was His true kingdom. It was there He found His first auditors, His first converts, His first disciples.

He went to Nazareth indeed, but spent but little time there. He will return there later on with the Twelve, preceded by the fame of His miracles, and Nazareth will treat Him as all the cities of the earth, even those most celebrated for their urbanity, as Athens and Florence have treated those among their own citizens who have contributed to make them renowned for ever. They had known Him since he was a child! Was it possible that He should be a great prophet? They first laughed Jesus to scorn and then sought to cast Him over a precipice.

He did not tarry long anywhere. Jesus was a wanderer, what the well-to-do citizen of sedentary habits, lounging in his doorway, would call a vagabond. His life was one long journey. Before that other—who was condemned to immortality by One who was Himself condemned to death—Jesus was the true Wandering Jew. He was born on a journey, born not even at an inn, for there was no

room available at Bethlehem for the pilgrim who was with child. While still at the breast He was carried along the interminable sun-scorched roads that lead into Egypt; from Egypt He returned to the waters and verdure of Galilee. From Nazareth He went frequently to Jerusalem for the Passover. John's voice called Him to the banks of the Jordan; an inner voice called Him to the desert. And after the forty days of fasting and temptation He began His restless wandering from town to town, from village to village, from hill-top to hill-top, throughout this much-divided Palestine. Oftenest we find Him in His native Galilee, at Capernaum, at Chorazin, at Canaan, at Magdala, at Tiberias. But He crosses also Samaria and loves to sit by the well at Sychar. We find Him also in the tetrarchy of Philip, at Bethsaida in the land of the Gadarenes, at Cæsarea, and even at Gerasa in Peræa of Herod Antipas. When in Judea He prefers to stop at Bethany, a few miles from Jerusalem, or at Jericho. But He does not hesitate to cross the boundaries of the ancient kingdom and go down among the Gentiles. We meet Him, in fact, in Phœnicia near Tyre and Sidon, and in Syria also, for His Transfiguration takes place on Mount Hermon. After His Resurrection He appears at Emmaus on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias, and it was finally at Bethany, near the house of him whom He had raised from the dead, that He took leave of His friends for ever.

He was the wanderer who never rested, the homeless wanderer, the wanderer for love, the voluntary exile from His own land. He Himself tells us that He has not one stone whereon to lay His head; and it is true that He possesses no couch whereon He may rest at night, nor a house He may call His own. His true home is the road He travels with His earliest followers, in search of new friends. His bed is a furrow in the fields, a bench in a boat, the shade of an olive-tree. At times He rests under the roof of a loving friend, but He is ever a passing guest whose visit is brief.

At the beginning of His predication we find Him often at Capernaum. It was His starting-place and the place

to which He returns. Matthew calls it 'His city.' In our tongues Capernaum is synonymous to confusion and disorder. The original village indeed, which had been inhabited by peasants and fisherfolk, had outgrown in every way of late. Situated on the caravan road that led from Damascus through Iturea to the sea, it had gradually become a trading station of some importance. Artisans, traders, merchants, agents and shopkeepers had settled there. Like flies gathering upon an overripe pear, money-lenders, publicans, the collectors of taxes, and other instruments of the executive power had flocked hither. The little town, half agricultural, half piscatorial, had become a city wherein all classes of society—including the military and prostitutes—were represented. But Capernaum, stretching along the lake-shore, cooled by the breath of neighbouring hills and the breeze from the water, was not as corrupted as the other cities of Syria or Jerusalem. It still contained peasants who every day went forth into the fields, and fishermen who were in their boats all day—poor, kind, warm-hearted people; men to whom one could talk of other things than merchandise and gold; men among whom one could breathe freely.

On every Sabbath day Jesus went to the synagogue. It was a plain, bare house, open to all; men assembled freely there as friends and brothers, and could read, speak, talk or dream of the Almighty.

Jesus would rise from His place and ask for one of the rolls of the Scripture—more often for one of the Prophets than for the law—and with a clear and steady voice He would read aloud three or four verses. Then He would speak with a daring and bold eloquence, confounding the Pharisees, touching the hearts of sinners, comforting the poor and inspiring the women with admiration.

The ancient text would suddenly appear transformed, light, lucid, appealing to all; it was a new revelation, a new truth, a new discovery; the mummified words of ancient times, the dry and frequent repetitions would come to their real life and colour once more. A new sun was gilding them, one by one, syllable by syllable, and they

became new words, coined on the instant, shining before the eyes of all like an unexpected revelation.

Never before had any one heard such a Rabbi at Capernaum. When Jesus spoke the synagogue was full, overflowing. All who could went in.

For on the Sabbath the market-gardener had laid aside his tools and needed not to draw water from the well to water his even rows of vegetables; the good-natured village smith was no more the man who, all the week, went covered with black soot, dust and filings, but he was now washed and clean for the day. His hands and face were perhaps brown still, but he was neat and clean, his beard combed and perfumed with some unguent that had cost but little but smelt as good as that used by the rich. This was the smith who all the week through had stood sweating and dirty before his forge, but who, now that the Sabbath had come, hastened to the synagogue to listen to the century-old word of his fathers' God. Devotion had undoubtedly brought him hither, but it was also a matter of habit, for his kinsfolk, friends and neighbours all frequent the synagogue, and he is sure to meet them there. Moreover, this day of rest, when his hands touched neither hammer nor tongs, seems endlessly long to him, and at Capernaum there is no other meeting-place. The mason comes also, the same who helped to build the synagogue and made it small because the elders who had the money—virtuous and God-fearing men, indeed, but somewhat parsimonious withal—would not spend much upon it; the mason, whose arms are still stiff and cramped after six days of toil, who during the week has had time to carry and set so many stones, cementing them at their place. He is to-day wearing his newest garments and sits crouching on the ground, he who all the week had stood erect, busy and careful, that the work might be well done to satisfy the master. The hard-working mason comes to this house that seems partly his own.

The fishermen were there also, the old man and the young, both bronzed by the sun; their eyes half closed from the glare of the reflection of the sun in the lake; the

old man is the handsomer for the contrast between his white locks and beard and his brown and wrinkled skin. They have left their barks on the beach, keel upwards; their nets are spread on the roofs, and they have come to the synagogue, although they are unused to confinement within walls of stone, and perhaps vaguely miss the rippling of the waves against the prow.

And here are assembled also the peasants from the surrounding rural districts. Peasants almost rich, not ashamed of their tunics, who are satisfied with the promise of their crops. They know they must not neglect the Lord who makes the barley head out and the vine flourish. Here also are the shepherds, arriving early; the herders of sheep and of goats, they carry with them the odour of the fold. These shepherds have spent the week in the hill pastures, seeing no one, never exchanging a word with the outside world; they dwell alone with the gentle sheep which, undisturbed, nibble the tender grass.

To the synagogue have come the house-owners, the small traders, and the rich men of Capernaum. Estimable, pious men who sit, solemn and with downcast eyes, in the front pews, satisfied with their dealings of the week just over, they are at peace with their consciences, they are uncontaminated. They sit in rows—their backs covered with fine garments, bent, but broad and imposing nevertheless; the backs of masters, of men in good standing both with the world and with God; backs full of authority and religion. The passing visitors come also to the synagogue, traders on their way into Syria or on their way back to Tiberias. These have come from motives of devotion perhaps, but perhaps also in search of a client, and they stare boldly with all the haughty arrogance which the possession of money lends to the indigent.

At the farther end of the room—for the synagogue is but a long, whitewashed hall not much larger than a schoolroom, an eating-house or a kitchen—huddled together near the door like a pack of dogs and as if expecting at any moment to be driven out, are the poor of the city, the very poorest of all, those who live from hand to mouth by

grudging charity or even—what misery !—by theft. These are the ragged, the flea-bitten, the slaves, the unfortunate, aged widows whose sons are far away, orphans who have been left destitute, the hunchbacked old men whom no one owns, the weaklings, the incurable ones ; those also whose intelligence has become clouded and those who have no trade and cannot work ; this pack comprises the weak, the infirm, mentally and bodily, the rejected, the derelict ; those who eat to-day and starve to-morrow, who never eat their fill, those who gather up what others throw away —dry crusts, heads of fish, cabbage stalks or vegetable parings—who sleep now here now there, who suffer from cold during the winter and long for the summer, that poor man's paradise, when there will be fruit to gather even in the hedgerows. These also, the miserable, the beggars, the diseased, and the weaklings, when the Sabbath comes, betake themselves to the synagogue to listen to the tales the Books contain. Nor may they be sent away. They have as much a right there as any one else. They are children of the same Father and servants of the same Lord. The Sabbath brings them some consolation for all their sufferings, because it is given to them to listen to the same words the rich and the well-faring are listening to. Here the food which they get is the same for all ; it is not poorer or less nourishing, as is the case in those houses where the master eats the best of everything, and the beggar at his gate must be satisfied with his leavings. They are provided here with food, which is the same for the rich and for the poor. The words of Moses are the same, eternally the same, to all—to him who owns the fattest flock and to him who has not so much as a leg of lamb for the Passover. But the words of the prophets are better still—better to the humble, more cruel to the mighty. And on every Saturday the poor worshippers hope to hear somebody read a chapter from Amos or Isaiah, because the prophets were on the side of the weak and foretold punishment and a new world.

On a certain Sabbath, then, One came to the synagogue especially for them ; One who had left the desert to pro-

claim the glad tidings to the poor and the sick. Never had any one spoken to them as He did. Never had any one shown so much love for them. Like the prophets of old, who had never returned to comfort them, He was showing a fondness for them that was offensive to the rich, but that filled the hearts of the poor with hope and comfort.

When Jesus ceased speaking the crowd near the door saw the elders, the masters, the rich, the Pharisees and those who could read and knew how to make money, shake their heads indignantly and rise from their seats with lips tightly closed. Exchanging glances that expressed their disapproval, they went out, and down the street, each muttering words of condemnation into his flowing grey or white beard.

No one laughed, however.

The traders followed pompously in the wake of their betters, already absorbed in plans for the morrow. There remained the labourers, the poor, the shepherds, the peasants, the gardeners, the smiths, the fishermen, and the pack of ragamuffins—the penniless orphans, the old whose strength was gone, the homeless vagabonds, the lonely outcasts, the paupers, the diseased, the mutilated, the exhausted, the derelict. These could not take their eyes from Jesus' face. They would have been glad to hear Him go on talking, and learn the exact date of the coming of the new kingdom, when they would receive their recompense for all they were now suffering, and with their own eyes see the mighty humbled. The words this young Man had spoken had made their tired hearts beat more swiftly. A ray of comfort, a glimpse of Heaven and of glory had been vouchsafed them, and, as He talked, visions of rich harvests and of feasts, of rest and plenty had been conjured up by the rich imagination of the poor. Certainly even they had not grasped as yet the Master's true meaning, and the kingdom they pictured to themselves was perhaps very much like the Philistines' land of milk and honey.

But no one loved the Master as they did; no one will ever love Him as did these Galilæans who hungered for

peace and truth. The poor also who were less poor, who felt less hungry for bread—the field labourers, workmen and fishermen—loved Him for the love of those others.

All, on leaving the synagogue, lingered in the street that they might see Him again; following Him timidly as in a dream. If He went into the house of a friend to eat they were jealous, and some would linger outside the door until He came out. Then, overcoming their timidity, they would approach Him and saunter along the shores of the lake in His company. Others would join the party on the way, and each in their turn, for they were more daring out here under the open sky than in the synagogue, would ask Him questions. And, pausing, Jesus would answer those obscure vagrants, in words that will never be forgotten.

XVII THE FIRST FOUR

Jesus found His first disciples among the fishermen at Capernaum. Almost every day He went to the lake shore. Sometimes the boats would be just starting out, sometimes He would see them returning, their sails bulging in the wind. Barefooted men would jump out of them and, wading knee-deep in the water, carry in the baskets wherein glittered the silver spoil—good and bad fish mixed together—and the great, dripping nets.

Sometimes, when they set forth at night by the bright moonlight and returned in the early morning, between the moon-set and the rising of the sun, Jesus, waiting for them on the beach, would be the first to welcome them. But the catch had not always been good, and when they returned empty-handed, tired and ill-humoured, Jesus would greet them with words of consolation, and, although they had not slept, the disappointed men always lent Him a willing ear.

One morning, as Jesus stood on the shore talking to some who had assembled around Him, He saw two boats getting back to Capernaum. Presently the fishermen got out and began to fold their nets. Then Jesus, stepping

into one of the boats, asked to be thrust out a short distance off from the shore and the crowd, and leaning there against the rudder He taught those assembled on the beach. When He had finished speaking He said to Simon : ' Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught.' But Simon, son of Jonah who was the owner of the boat, replied : ' Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing ; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.' When they had gone a little distance from the shore Simon and his brother Andrew cast a large net, and on withdrawing it found that it was so full of fish that its meshes were almost breaking. Hereupon the two brothers called out to their companions in the other boat to come and help them ; and having cast their net a second time they again drew it up full. When Simon, who was of an impulsive nature, saw that, he fell at the knees of their guest, crying : ' Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' But Jesus only smiled, and said : ' Come ye after me and I will make you to become fishers of men.'

On reaching the shore they beached their boats and, leaving their nets behind, the two brothers followed Jesus. A few days later the Master came upon two other brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who had been Simon and Andrew's partners, and He called them as they sat mending their nets. And they also, bidding farewell to their father, who was in the boat with his ' hired helpers,' left their nets, rose up and followed Him.

Thus was Jesus no longer alone. Four men, two couples of brothers, more strongly bound together in the faith than by the ties of blood, were ready to accompany Him wherever He might lead ; they were ready to repeat His words, to obey Him like a father, more unquestioningly even than had He been their earthly father. Four poor fishermen, four simple souls from the lake, men who could not read and could hardly express themselves in words ; four humble individuals whom no one would have singled out from amongst the rest, had been summoned by Jesus to help Him in founding a kingdom that would encompass the earth. For His sake they had forsaken the boats they

had so often pushed off into the water, so often moored at the landing-place, and their old nets, both the fine and the coarse ones, that had raised thousands of fishes from the depths of the waters ; for His sake they had forsaken father, family and home. They left everything to follow this Man, who promised them neither money nor lands, who spoke only of love, poverty and perfection.

Even though their spirit may ever remain common and coarse, in comparison with the Master, even though at times they may doubt and fail to grasp the meaning of His truths and parables, even though in the end they may forsake Him, all will be forgiven them because of the honest and unhesitating alacrity wherewith they responded to His first call.

How many of us to-day would have the courage to follow the example of those four poor men of Capernaum ? Should a prophet appear and say to the merchant, Leave your shop and your till ; to the professor, Come down from your chair and throw aside your books ; to the minister, Cast aside your documents and your lies that are but snares to men ; to the workman, Lay down your tools and I will give you other work to do ; to the peasant, Stop your plough and leave the share in the furrow, for I promise you a more marvellous crop ; to the mechanic, Bring your machine to a standstill and follow me, for the spirit is more than metal ; to the rich man, Give away all you possess, for with me you shall find treasure without end—should a prophet speak thus to men at the present day, how many would follow him with the confiding alacrity of those fishermen of old ? But Jesus did not summon the merchant trading in the market-place and warehouse, nor those pious individuals who weigh the last letter of the law and know the Scriptures by heart, nor the peasants who are all too closely attached to the soil and the animals, nor much less did He summon those corrupted by money and greed who think not of another kingdom because they have long ago come into their own.

It was not by chance that Jesus chose His first followers from among fishermen. The fisherman who spends the

greater part of his days in solitude and encompassed by pure waters is *the man who knows how to wait.* He is the man of patience who is not pressed for time ; who casts his net and leaves the rest to the Almighty. Water has its moods and the lake its fancies, and his days are never monotonous. On setting forth the fisherman knows not whether he will return with his boat full or without a single fish to cook for his evening meal. He places himself in God's hands, who sends both abundance and want. When times are hard he consoles himself with the thought of past times that were better and of better times to come. He does not seek to make money rapidly, and he is happy if he can but barter the fruits of his toil for a little bread and wine. He is clean both in mind and body, for his hands are washed in the waters of the lake and his spirit in those of solitude.

Of those fishermen who would otherwise have died unknown to fame at Capernaum, of whose very existence only their neighbours would have been aware, Jesus made saints, made men still remembered and prayed to. The Greatest of all called great men into being ; from a race of dreamers He brought forth the Awakeners ; from a race that was degenerate, the Warriors ; from a race that was ignorant, the Teachers. If there be but the hand to kindle it, a fire may flame forth at any time. A David always finds his Ghibborim, an Agamemnon his Heroes, an Arthur his Knights, a Charlemagne his Paladins, a Napoleon his Marshals. And among the common people of Galilee Jesus found His first Apostles.

XVIII THE MOUNTAIN

The Sermon on the Mount is man's greatest title to existence ; it is the adequate justification of his presence in the universe ; it is the patent of our dignity as beings with a soul ; the proof that we may rise above ourselves and become more than men ; the pledge of this supreme possibility, of this hope, of our ascension.

Should an angel come down to us from a higher sphere

and ask to see our best and most precious possession, the best proof of our certainty, the masterpiece of mind at its highest power, we would not show him our great greasy machines, those mechanical marvels of which we are so foolishly proud, although, indeed, they have shortened our lives and rendered them more difficult and slavish, and are nought but matter at the service of material needs and superfluities. We would show the angel the Sermon on the Mount, and after that, perhaps, but only after it, some few pages taken from the poets of all peoples. The *Sermon*, however, will always remain the diamond of unique magnificence, shining in all the splendour of its white purity amidst emeralds and sapphires that are splendid in colour only.

And should man be summoned to appear before a superhuman tribunal to render an account of his fatal errors, of the long-standing atrocities that every day are renewed, of the massacres that have been going on for thousands of years, of all the blood that has flowed from the veins of our brothers, of the tears shed by the children of men, of our stony-heartedness and perfidy which is equalled perhaps only by our imbecility, he would not seek to justify himself by means of philosophical arguments, no matter how learnedly and cleverly turned, nor by the sciences, which are but ephemeral systems of symbols and formulæ, nor by adducing our laws, which are but disgraceful compromises between cruelty and fear. To place in the balance against so much evil, in part payment of our debt, in extenuation of sixty centuries of revolting history, we would only have the few verses of which the Sermon on the Mount consists.

He who has read them without once experiencing (at least while his eyes still rested on the page) a throb of grateful tenderness, a tightening in his throat, an impulse of love and remorse, a vague but pressing need to do his part that these words may not remain mere words, that this Sermon may not remain a mere sign and echo, but become an immediate hope, a source of vitality to all the living, an actual, ever-enduring truth for all; he, I say,

who has not experienced all this is more deserving of our loving pity than any one else, for not all the love of mankind can suffice to compensate him for what he has lost.

The mount whereon Jesus sat on the day He delivered the Sermon was certainly less high than the mountain whence Satan had pointed out to Him the kingdoms of the earth. From that elevation only the smiling countryside, kissed by the evening sun, could be seen; it stretched between the silvery-green oval of the lake on one hand and, on the other, the crest of Mount Carmel where Elijah had defeated the prophets of Baal. But from this slight elevation, which became a mountain only by a stretch of imagination on the part of them who described it; which was, perhaps, little more than a mound, a spot but slightly raised above the surrounding plain; from this mount, all undeserving of its title, Jesus pointed out that endless kingdom that has no boundaries, and wrote in the hearts of men—not upon tablets of stone as Jehovah had done—the canticle of man reborn, the hymn of transcendence. 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!' Isaiah was never so truly a prophet as in the moment when these words flowed from his soul.

Jesus, with the first of His Apostles, was seated upon a mount confronted by hundreds of eyes all earnestly searching His own, when some one asked Him who would inherit this Kingdom of Heaven of which He so often spoke.

His answer is contained in the nine Beatitudes, which are as the peristyle, 'shining with glory,' of the whole Sermon.

The Beatitudes, which are often quoted even to-day by those who have lost the sense of their true meaning, are almost always misinterpreted. They reach us mutilated, contaminated, deformed, minimized, distorted, spoiled. And yet they epitomize that first, festive day of Christ's teaching.

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Luke omitted the words 'in spirit,' meaning us to understand those who are simply poor, an inter-

pretation many since him have accepted. But the malice of a later period prompted some to suggest that Jesus had meant the simple, the foolish, the idiotic. In a word, we were left to choose between the pauper and the imbecile.

At that moment, however, Jesus was not thinking of either of these classes. He had no liking for the rich, and with His whole soul detested the greed of riches which is the main stumbling-block in the way of accumulating spiritual treasures. Jesus loved the poor and held them nearest to His heart because, more than the others, they need to be warmed by affection. He addressed Himself to them because they stand in greater need than others to being fed with words of love. But He did not intend to maintain that material and social poverty can alone constitute a title to participation in the joys of the kingdom.

Jesus never gave any mark of admiration for intelligence in the abstract, for the mere capacity for remembering certain phrases and formulæ. Pure metaphysicians and sophists, those who pry into the secrets of nature and those who devour many books to little profit, would not have found favour in His eyes. But that intelligence which is the power to understand the signs of the future and the meaning of symbols enlightening and prophetic intelligence, a loving grasp of truth—He looked upon as a divine gift, and He frequently expressed His regret that His disciples were not more richly endowed with it. To Him the highest intelligence consisted in understanding that intelligence alone is not sufficient; that in order to attain to happiness, the whole soul must undergo transformation—for happiness is no absurd dream, but an eternal possibility that is within reach. Intelligence, however, we must have to help us towards this total transformation. Jesus, then, could not have intended to summon dullards and fools to participate in the joys of God's kingdom.

The poor in spirit are those who are fully and painfully conscious of the imperfections of their own souls, of the lack of goodness in all of us, of the state of moral indigence

wherein the majority dwell. Among the poor only those suffer who are keenly conscious of their poverty. Did they not suffer they would not seek to better their condition. How widely do these differ from the falsely rich, the proud, who deem themselves rich in spirit, that is to say, complete and therefore incapable of becoming more perfect; whose houses are in order and who believe themselves to be in good standing with their fellow-men and to have found favour in the sight of the Almighty; who never experience the longing to be uplifted, because they cherish the illusion that they have already attained to the loftiest heights, and who will never be enriched because they have no perception of their utter poverty.

Those, then, who confess themselves poor and are willing to suffer in order to achieve perfection, which is the only true wealth, will become holy as God is holy, and of such will be the kingdom of heaven. But those who fail to perceive the horror that empty pride conceals will never enter the kingdom.

'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' The earth here mentioned is neither the ploughed field nor kingdoms with their proud cities. In Messianic language to 'inherit the earth' means to have a share in the New Kingdom. The soldier who fights for earthly possessions must perforce be fierce; but he who fights within himself for the conquest of the new earth and new heaven must not give way to anger, which is an evil counsellor, nor to cruelty, which is the negation of love. The meek are those who suffer the presence of the wicked and their own, which is often far more irksome to themselves; who do not resort to acts of violence against the wicked, but conquer them by gentleness; who do not fly into a rage at the first sign of opposition, but subdue their inner foe with that calm determination that testifies of a greater strength of mind than do sudden outbreaks of unavailing wrath. They are like water that gently laps the hand and makes room to all things, but which, rising slowly, silently surrounds and with steady gentleness wears away, in the course of patient years, even the hardest rocks.

XIX THEY THAT MOURN

'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' The afflicted, those who shed bitter tears, those who loathe themselves and are filled with pity for their fellow-men; who do not live the passive, half-drunken, stupid lives of the common herd; who mourn over their own unhappiness and that of others; who mourn over the many wasted efforts and the blindness that delays the triumph of light (for light cannot come from heaven if the eyes of man do not reflect it); who mourn the remoteness of that state of well-being so often dreamed of, so often promised, but whose advent is ever deferred by our own faults and those of all mankind; who mourn over the injuries they suffer instead of seeking vengeance; who mourn over the evil they themselves have done and the good they have omitted to do; who do not lament the loss of any visible treasure, but yearn only to possess the invisible; all these who mourn hasten the conversion of others by their tears, and it is but just that they should one day be comforted.

'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.' Justice as Jesus understands is not the justice of man, it is not the obedience to human laws and codes and the respect due to customs and compromises established by man. In the language of the psalmists and the prophets the righteous man is he who lives according to the will of God, that is to say, of the supreme archetype of all perfection; not according to the law as set down by the Scribes and registered with all the subtle disingenuousness of the Pharisees, but according to the one and only law that Jesus epitomizes in a single commandment: 'Love all men, be they your neighbours or far removed from you, your fellow-countrymen or strangers, friends or enemies.' Those who hunger and thirst perpetually for this form of justice will have their hunger satisfied and their thirst quenched in the Kingdom. Even though they fail to attain perfection in all things, much will be forgiven them who suffer during this time of waiting.

'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' He who loves shall receive love; he who helps shall be helped in return. The law of retaliation is abolished when evil is concerned, but it still prevails with regard to what is good. We are continually sinning against the spirit, and we shall find remission of these sins only if we forgive those that are committed against ourselves. Christ is in all men, and what we do unto them will be done unto us also. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' If we are merciful to others we may expect mercy for ourselves; only if we forgive the evil others do unto us can God forgive that which we do unto ourselves.

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Those are pure in heart who have had no other desire than perfection, no other joy than that of conquering the evil that lies waiting for us on all sides. They whose hearts are full of unnatural cravings, of earthly ambitions, of all the passionate desires wherein writhe the worms that inhabit the earth, can never behold the face of God, they shall never know the joy of merging themselves in His glory.

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.' The peacemakers are not the meek of the second Beatitude. The meek are those who do not return evil for evil, but the peacemakers are those who set good where evil was, who establish peace in time of war. When Jesus said that He was come to bring war and not peace, He meant war against evil, against Satan and the world, against evil which is an offence, against Satan the murderer, against the world where strife reigns eternally. In a word, Jesus meant to wage war against war. The peacemakers are precisely those who strive against strife, who pacify and establish concord. Love of self is the root of every war, love of self which becomes love of riches, pride of possession, envy of them who are more richly endowed, and contempt for the humble. The new law comes to teach contempt of self, contempt for such possessions as those that may be measured, love for all creatures, even

those who hate us. The peacemakers who teach and spread this love strike at the origin of all strife ; for, when every man shall love his neighbour even better than himself, there will be no more strife between man and man, between caste and caste, between one people and another ; there will be no more wars either great or small, either civil or international, either of words or of violence. The peacemakers will have brought peace to the world, and they will justly be termed God's own children and be among the first to enter the Kingdom.

' Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' I send you forth to found this kingdom which is of heaven, of that higher justice which is love, of that fatherly kindness which is called God ; I send you, therefore, to overthrow all the props of injustice, to strive with them who wear the livery of matter, the champions of the enemy. These, when you shall assail them, will seek to defend themselves, and will use violence against you. You will suffer torture both of body and of mind ; you will be deprived of your liberty and perhaps even of life itself. But if you accept suffering joyfully in order that you may bring to others that justice the absence of which is the cause of your own pain, then shall persecution confer upon you the inalienable right to enter into the kingdom which you will have helped to found.

' Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.' Persecution is mainly material and physical, or is inflicted by means of judicial and political machinations. They may deprive you of food, of the light of the sun, of blessed freedom itself, and even seek to crush your bones ; but they will not stop at material persecution. Be prepared to face insult and calumny. They will not be satisfied with condemning you because you have sought to change men, who are beasts, into saints ; those who lie prone upon the reeking filth of animalism have no wish to be raised up, and such will not be satisfied with rending your body. They will lay hold upon your very soul, and

accuse you of every most abominable vice; they will cover you with vituperation and insult; the hogs will swear that you are unclean, the asses that you are ignorant, the vultures that you feast upon carrion, the sheep that you are evil-smelling, the dissolute will cry scandal upon you for your obscenity and thieves will denounce you for a robber. But let your hearts rejoice, for the insults of the wicked serve but to consecrate your own goodness, and the mire wherewith the impure seek to spatter you is but the proof of your purity. This is what S. Francis termed the *Perfect Happiness.* 'Above all other gifts which Christ has bestowed upon His own is the grace to conquer themselves and willingly to submit to suffering, insult and discomfort. For of none of the other gifts may we take glory unto ourselves, insomuch as they are not our own, but God's; but from tribulation and affliction willingly suffered we may take glory unto ourselves, because they are our very own.'

All the prophets who have raised their voices against the world have suffered insult at the hands of men, and the fate of all future prophets will be the same. This is precisely what distinguishes the prophet who, slandered and derided, nevertheless walks among men with a smiling face, never once ceasing to cry aloud the message it is his to deliver. The mouth of him who must speak cannot be stopped with mud, and even though they slay the truly zealous apostle they will fail to silence him, for his voice, gaining strength from the resounding echoes of the tomb, will make itself heard in all languages and throughout all time.

The Beatitudes end with this promise. The citizens of the kingdom are numbered and signed. Every one can recognize them. The unwilling are warned, and a new hope is held out to those who are in danger.

The rich, the proud, those who are self-satisfied, the violent, the unjust, the disturbers of the peace, those who deride, those who do not seek perfection, those who mete out abuse and persecution are debarred from the kingdom of heaven. Not until they themselves are

conquered and transformed, until they become the opposite of what they are to-day, will they be able to enter it. Those whom the world regards as happy, whom the world envies, imitates and admires, are infinitely more remote from true happiness than are those whom the world hates and despises. By means of this first joyful message Jesus inverted the human hierarchy; His mission was to invert all the values of life, and no other readjustment was ever so divinely paradoxical as His.

XX THE SUBVERTER

The Gymnosophists of Eunuchism and the sluggish Saturnists—that is to say, all those grave men who come upon the scene when facts are already accomplished, who, establishing no new facts, only reaffirm and minimize those already ascertained—these men, I say, always maintain a hostile attitude towards what is or appears paradoxical. They will not be at the pains of distinguishing between the paradoxical in true religion and the fatuous conceptions of crazed or warped minds, and so pompously proclaim that what is paradoxical is but the subversion of some ancient and recognized truth, and consequently false; they declare that everything paradoxical is a lie and, to clip the wings of soaring vanity, add that it is, moreover, a lie of easy invention. For it would appear that they deem it more difficult to follow the way already smoothed down and interpret line for line what has been written before their birth by men who, unlike themselves, were certainly not dominated by cowardly sloth.

If these high priests of the *Already-Said* (whom we may tolerate as the preservers of tradition, but who are intolerable when they seek to hinder the acceptance of what is new) would but take the trouble to evoke from the depths of their overstocked memories those few fundamental ideas whereon rests or rather agonizes the whole of modern thought, they would find (O shameful coincidence!) that nearly every one of them is a subversion—that is to say, a paradox.

When Rousseau tells us that man is born good and that society is responsible for his corruption, he is subverting the accepted dogma of original sin; when the champion of the theory of progress declares that what is best is the outcome of what is the least good; when the evolutionist states that what is complex comes from what is simple, and the monist assures us that all diversities are but so many manifestations of oneness; when the disciple of Marx proclaims that economics engender spirituality, and modern scientists affirm that man is not, as has always been believed, the centre of the universe, but nothing more than a microscopic animal species living upon one of the innumerable spheres that are scattered throughout the universe; when Protestants cry out that the Pope is of no account and that Holy Writ alone is of importance, and the French revolutionists shout that the Third Estate is nought and yet is everything—what else is all this than the subversion of ancient and generally accepted beliefs?

But of all subverters Jesus is the greatest. He is the Supreme Master of paradox, the most radical and fearless of subverters. And herein lies His greatness, His eternal newness and freshness, the secret attraction that causes all generous spirits to gravitate, sooner or later, towards His Gospel.

He became incarnate that He might transform man who had sunk into error and sin. He found error and sin in the world, and what else could He do but subvert the world's beliefs?

Read again the words spoken on the Mount. At each step Jesus will have us recognize that what is base is exalted, that the last shall be first, that the outcast shall be preferred, that the despised shall be respected, and, finally, that the old truth shall be looked upon as error and common life as corruption and death. Against the past, stiffening in its death agony, against nature whom man all too willingly obeys, against beliefs held by all, Jesus hurled the mightiest NO the world's history has ever registered.

Herein He was true to the spirit of His race, that has ever found fresh ground for hope in the very fact of its

degradation. The people reduced to most abject slavery preamt of dominating others through the Son of David; the most despised of all peoples was convinced of the ultimate glory of its destiny; the people God chastised most severely held itself to be the best beloved; the most sinful of all peoples believed that it alone would be saved. This absurd certainty of ultimate recompense that was innate in the Hebrew conscience became in Christ a revision of values, and by the very logic of His transcendentalism resulted in a divine reform of principles which humanity has accepted and respects.

Jesus' tacit certainty coincides with Buddha's first discovery that all men are unhappy, even those who appear to be happy.

Siddharta taught that to banish pain, life itself must be suppressed; Jesus founded His teachings upon another hope, all the more sublime because of its apparent absurdity. Men are unhappy because they have not known how to find the true life; let them become the opposite of what they are, let them do the contrary to what they have always done, and the era of earthly happiness will dawn.

Heretofore they have followed nature, have allowed themselves to be guided by their instincts, have obeyed a temporary and inadequate code, have worshipped false gods, have sought happiness in wine, in the flesh, in riches, in commanding, in acts of cruelty, in art and in knowledge, and have succeeded only in inflaming the soreness of their own disease. This means that they have chosen the wrong path, that they must retrace their steps, renounce what once seemed good, and gather up what they have cast aside, 'adore what they have burnt and burn what they once worshipped,' subdue all animal instincts instead of satisfying them, contend against nature instead of obeying its dictates, create a new law and live by it unfalteringly in spirit.

If heretofore we have failed to find what we sought, there is no remedy but to subvert the life we are living; in other words, to transform our souls.

Our ever-enduring unhappiness is the proof that the

experience of the ancient world was mistaken; that nature is our enemy; that the past was wrong; that to live like the beasts and according to their elementary instincts, beneath a thin varnish of humanity, is but to struggle everlastingly in the clutches of despair.

Those who, either in anguish or in a spirit of derision, have proclaimed man's boundless misery, have indeed been clear-sighted. The pessimists are not mistaken. How are we to confute their scornful denunciations of our shortcomings, our impotence, our pettiness?

Whosoever is not born to creep contentedly amongst other worms and swallow his allotted particle of earth, whosoever has not merely a belly and a pair of hands but has a soul and heart as well, and who, being of a finer nature, is eternally having his senses offended, cannot but feel a horror of mankind. In sterile natures this horror becomes loathing and hatred; in richer and more generous natures it turns to pity and love.

When Leopardi had lost the love of Christ of his early years (perhaps through the fault of the imperfect Christians by whom he was surrounded), and had been brought to the verge of despair by the exercise of his powers of reasoning, his cry was: 'Life is nought but bitterness and weariness!' And who would have the heart to say to him: 'Hold thy peace, thou miserable being! Dost thou not perceive that this bitterness comes from the wormwood thou rollest beneath thy tongue, and that this weariness is of thine own creating? For hast thou not applied ratiocination to cauterize those sentiments which might have made thy life happy or at least bearable?'

No, Leopardi was not mistaken. When a man sees his fellow-men as they are and has no hope whatever of saving them, of changing them; when he discovers that he cannot live as they do because he is differently constituted; when he cannot bring himself to love them because he is convinced that they are condemned for all time to misery and wickedness; when he is convinced also that the brutes will always remain brutes, the cowards always remain cowards, and the unclean become ever more loathsome, what else

is there for him but to bid his heart be silent, and to look to death for deliverance ?

The problem is one and one only : Are men indeed unalterable, and is it impossible to transform and better them ? Or can they transcend their own humanity, become sanctified, even deified ? The fate of humanity is contained in this question. Even the greatest among men have rarely grasped the true significance of the dilemma. Many have believed—many still believe—that the outward forms of life may be altered but not its fundamental principles, and that to man may be given to do everything save to alter the nature of his own spirit. Man may become more absolutely master of the world, he may grow richer and wiser, but his moral structure can never change ; his sentiments and primal instincts will remain the same ever ; what they were in the savage cave-dweller, in the lake-builder, in the barbarians of early days, in the inhabitants of the most ancient kingdoms.

Others there are who experience the same horror of man as he was and is, but who, before succumbing to the despair of nullity, stop to consider what man may become ; these believe in the possibility of spiritual improvement, and find their happiness in the divine but terrible task of preparing the happiness of their fellow-men.

For men who are true men there is no other way. For them there can be but the anguish of despair or the strongest faith. Either they must perish or they must save others.

The past was horrible and the present is disgusting. Let us dedicate our lives, let us offer all our capacity for loving and understanding, that the morrow may be better and the future happy. If, heretofore, we have been in error—and our present wretchedness is proof of this—let us labour for the birth of a new man and a new life. This is the only light that illumines our way. Either happiness will never be given to man, or, as Jesus firmly believed, if happiness is ever to become our common and eternal possession, we can only purchase it at the one price of altering our course, transforming our Spirit, creating new

values, denying the old, and shouting the NO of righteousness against the world's insidious YES.

If Christ was mistaken there remains nothing but absolute and universal negation and voluntary destruction; either unmitigated and complete atheism—not the hypocritical and stunted atheism of the pusillanimous sceptics of our day—or that active faith in Christ which is salvation and resurrection through Love.

XXI IT HAS BEEN SAID . . .

The history of mankind is the history of a long training. It is the history of a war waged between the few who are spiritually strong and the many who are strong in numbers only. It is the history of an education ever unsuccessful, ever to be recommenced; of a thankless, difficult course of instruction, reluctantly submitted to, often even repulsed; alternately suspended and resumed.

The earliest prophets, the most ancient lawgivers, the shepherds of nations in their infancy, the kings who founded cities and established justice, all the wise and holy teachers, undertook the conquest of the Beast at an early date. By means of the spoken and graven word they tamed men who were as wolves, subdued the savage, held the barbarian in check, disciplined white-haired children, softened the hearts of the fierce and dominated the violent, the inhuman, and those who sought vengeance; accomplishing this sometimes by gentle means, sometimes by inculcating the fear of punishment. Orpheus or Draco, those who promised and those who threatened, in the name of the gods either of the high heaven or of those of the depths, all did but draw claws that were quick to grow again, muzzle and gag fanged jaws, and temporarily defend the weak, the victims, the pilgrim and the women.

The ancient law, that which is found set forth with but slight variations in the Manava Dharmasastra, the Pentateuch, the Ta-Hio, and the Avesta, in the traditions of Solon and of Numa, in the sentences of Hesiod and of the Seven Sages, was a first imperfect, rough, and inadequate

attempt to drag forth from the quicksands of animalism an embryonic beginning, a vague semblance of humanity.

This law consisted of but a few elementary prohibitions : thou shalt not kill, bear false witness, commit fornication, oppress the weak, cause unnecessary sufferings to the stranger and the slave. These are the social virtues which are absolutely indispensable if all are to dwell together for their own profit. The lawgiver contented himself in reducing the number of those crimes which were most common. He made his prohibitions as few as possible, and seldom aspired to attain anything beyond approximate justice. But, before its own existence and side by side with itself, the law presupposed the existence of evil, the supremacy of instinct. Each precept implies its own infringement ; each rule a contrary practice. Therefore the ancient law, the law of primitive people, afforded but an inadequate means of restraining the eternal and triumphant brute. It was a medley of half-measures and compromises between custom and justice, between nature and reason, between the rebellious brute and the divine model.

The men of olden times, the carnal, physically powerful, sensual, corpulent, sturdy, full-blooded, well-built men, with shaggy manes and red faces, devourers of raw meat, stealers of flocks, ravishers of virgins, slaughterers of their enemies, worthy, like Hector of Troy, to be called ' slayers of men ' ; the mighty warriors with ravenous appetites who, after conquering their foe and dragging him by the heels, restored their strength with huge portions of fat beef and mutton and great tankards of wine ; the half-savage men who were but lightly affected by the law, men as we see them in the Mahabharata and the Iliad, in the poem of Izdubar, and in the book of the wars of *Jahweh*, would have been even more wild and fierce had it not been for the fear of the gods and of chastisement. In times when for an eye a whole head was claimed, for a finger an arm, and for a life a hundred lives, the law of retaliation that claimed but an eye for an eye and a life for a life was a signal victory of gentleness and justice, although to us, who live by the law of Jesus, it may seem dreadful enough.

But the law was more often disregarded than obeyed; the strong tolerated it unwillingly; the powerful, who should have upheld it, used it for their own purposes; the wicked openly defied it; the weak sought to evade it. But even had the law been obeyed implicitly, by all and at all times, it would not have sufficed to conquer the evil that was perpetually fermenting and rising to the surface. Crime was checked at times but never overcome; it was rendered more difficult in practice but never made impossible; it was condemned but never abolished. The law abated natural ferocity but did not destroy it, and man, subdued somewhat but still rebellious, took to feigning obedience, performing some good actions in the sight of all that he might be freer to sin in secret, took to exaggerating the observance of outward ceremonial only the more grossly to outrage the fundamental principles and the spirit of the law.

Humanity had reached this point when Jesus delivered His Sermon on the Mount. He knew that the ancient law was worn out, was lifeless, and had sunk into the dead swamp of formalism. The task of educating humanity which had begun thousands of years before Him must be renewed. Freed from the ashes of the past, its smouldering fire must be reanimated with the enthusiasm of a new beginning; it must be brought back to its original purpose, which is always *Metanoia*—the transformation of the spirit. To accomplish this the ancient, devitalized, worn-out law had to be fulfilled, and the best means of achieving its fulfilment was to carry it to the extremes, to twist it into one mighty paradox and finally create a new law in its place capable of bringing about a real and complete transformation of human nature.

One passage in the Gospels seems to deny that such was indeed Jesus' supreme purpose: 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.' But again in Matthew, after that explicit declaration comes a passage that circumscribes it and, in part at least, contradicts it. The true meaning of this passage has not been understood because we are all

dominated by the idea that the law of Jesus is but the continuation of the law of Moses. 'For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.' This means that heaven and earth and no smallest part of the law can pass away or be abolished until 'all things shall have been fulfilled.' This literal translation gives us the key to the mystery. Jesus' meaning is this, that until all things—in other words, what little there is that is good and just in the old law—shall have been fulfilled, shall have become a constant rule of life, a universal and preparatory habit, the authority of the old commandments must stand. These commandments are a minimum indeed, but they form the lowest step of the ladder whereby we ascend to the new law. When *all* shall have been accomplished and the old law have become blood of his blood and the new law have been proclaimed, then man will have no further use for the ancient and imperfect code, and a higher and greater law which will outstrip the other and, in part, deny it will take its place.

In the heat of argument with the Pharisees Jesus is still more explicit: 'The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.' The new law, then, begins with Jesus and the old is set aside and declared inadequate.

Each example that Jesus adduces He introduces by the words: 'It has been said unto you . . .' but He immediately sets over against the old commandment (which He either completely inverts or purges by revealing its paradoxical nature) the new words: 'But I say unto you . . .'

These 'buts' mark the beginning of a new day in the story of the education of humanity, and it is not Jesus' fault if we are still groping in the dim light of dawn.

XXII BUT I SAY UNTO YOU . . .

'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in

danger of the judgment; but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.'

Jesus goes straight to extremes. He does not even admit the possibility of killing. He will not believe it possible that a man may be capable of wounding or slaying his brother. He cannot conceive how even the intention, the will of killing can exist. A single moment of anger, one word of abuse, one single threatening gesture are equivalent to murder. Feeble, cowardly souls will cry out that this is an exaggeration; but in all greatness there is passion which is exaggeration. Jesus follows His own logic, and makes no mistake. Murder is but the last stage of a sentiment. Wrath leads man to evil words; evil words lead to evil deeds; blows to murder. Therefore it is not enough to forbid the material, outward and final act. This is but the climax of an inner process that has made it inevitable. The evil must be attacked at its very root. From the moment its seed is sown, the vile weed of hatred bears deadly fruit, and must be destroyed by fire.

Achilles, son of Peleus, that same Achilles who flew into a great rage because they deprived him of his concubine and who, in the presence of his dead enemy, prayed the gods to give him the instincts of the cannibal that he might set his teeth in that flesh; Achilles addressed his silver-footed mother as follows:

'. . . that black fiend Contention, who would to God might die
To Gods and men, and Anger too, that kindles tyranny
In men most wise, being much more sweet than liquid honey is
To men of pow'r to satiate their watchful enmities,
And like a pliant fume it spreads through all their breasts. . . .'[1]

After the slaughter of his companions, after the death of his dearest friend, Achilles discovers at last the true

[1] Iliad, book xviii., Chapman's translation.—Translator.

nature of wrath that spreads itself and finally dominates, and whose flame not even a river of blood can extinguish. The irascible hero knows this, but it leads him not to renounce his wrath ; he does but abate his fury against the king of men that he may seek fiercer vengeance against the mangled body of Hector.

Wrath is like fire : while still a spark, it can be extinguished ; afterwards it is too late. Jesus is well aware of this fact when He condemns the first injurious word to the same punishment as the act of murder itself. When all shall have learnt to strangle every impulse of resentment at its very birth and choke back the wrathful answer, strife of words and of blows will cease among men, and murder will become but the dark memory of a brutal era.

' Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery ; but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.'

Here again Jesus does not stop at the material fact, which alone is considered by men of coarse sentiments. He carries His reasoning from the body to the soul, from the flesh to the will, from the tangible to the intangible. The tree is judged by its fruits, but the seed is judged by the tree.

When evil is become apparent to all it is too late to remedy it. Matured to that extent, it can no longer be suppressed. Sin is like a festering sore that breaks out suddenly, but would never have appeared had the blood been purged in time of all its impurities.

When a man has persuaded another's wife and both share this desire, their infidelity is complete and they are as guilty of adultery as though they had committed the act itself. Man does not marry a woman's body only but her soul as well ; if her soul be lost to him he has already forfeited what is most precious, and although the loss of the rest may cause him cruel suffering, it is of far less importance. A woman who, against her will, suffers violence at the hands of a stranger is not an adulteress. The intention and sentiment alone count. He who wishes to

preserve his purity must abstain from all passing and secret desire; for if the glance of desire be not checked immediately it will be repeated, and from a glance there is but one step to a word, to a kiss, to 'Love, that permits no loved one not to love,' as hell itself knows. (Dante, *Inferno*.)

To contemplate, imagine or desire an act of infidelity is in itself unfaithfulness. Only he who breaks the first mesh can save himself from the vast and wicked net that is born of a glance, and from which even death itself cannot deliver him. Jesus even exhorts those who are tempted to pluck out and cast from them the eye that offends, to cut off and cast from them the hand whence comes offence. This advice is well calculated to fill with dismay both the bold and the cowardly, for it is as inexorable as the logic of the absolute. But even the greatest craven, when gangrene threatens him, will submit himself to the removal of an arm or a leg, and for an internal tumour is ready to suffer mutilation if only his life may be spared. But this is a question of saving the body only. When it is a question of maintaining the health of the soul, without which the body is but a meaningless mechanism, we deem any sacrifice monstrous.

'Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.'

He who swears truthfully is afraid; he who swears a false oath is a traitor. The one believes that the power he has evoked may punish him for so doing; the other is an impostor who takes advantage of the good faith of others, in order to deceive them the better. In either case the oath is an evil thing. For us in our impotence to call

upon a higher power to bear witness or act as judge in settling our petty, shameful quarrels, to swear upon the heads of our children, we who are incapable of altering even the outward appearance of any smallest part of our body, is an absurd challenge, an act of blasphemy. He who always speaks the truth, not from fear of retribution but because it is his nature so to do, has no need of oaths. The veracity of an oath is almost always contested and doubted, nor does it inspire full confidence even in him who pretends to regard it as the truth. For the world's history has recorded an infinitely greater number of false than of true oaths, and he it is who swears most solemnly who is already prepared to betray.

It has been said : ' Honour thy father and thy mother,' but I say unto you, ' He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.' And again : ' If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.'

Here again the old precept which binds the new man to the old by ties of reverence is cruelly inverted.

Jesus does not condemn filial affection, but relegates it to its proper place, which is not in the first rank as the ancients believed.

To Him the greatest, the purest love is that of a father. In his son a father loves the future, and what is new ; in his father the son loves the past, and what is old. But Jesus was come to change the past, to destroy what was old ; reverence to parental authority, all that makes us the slaves of tradition and family, hinders the world's regeneration. To love mankind is something more than to love them who gave us life ; it is infinitely preferable to labour for the salvation of all mankind than for that of a family whose members are but few. In order to reach and achieve the most one must relinquish the least. It would be all too easy to love our own kin alone, and to use this affection, which indeed is often strained and feigned, as an excuse for our disregard of others. But whosoever has dedicated his life to the transcendental, to a great

undertaking that demands his whole being and each hour of his life until the very last; whosoever would serve the universe in the spirit of universalism, must relinquish, and, if need be, deny all common affections. He who would be a father in the deepest and most divine sense, even if without human paternity, must be something more than a son. 'Let the dead bury their dead.'

The old law, and especially the doctoral traditions, contained hundreds of rules for the purifying of the body, minute, inconvenient, complicated prescriptions that had no real significance either materially or spiritually. But the Pharisees deemed the strict observance of these traditions to be the most important part of their religion. It is easier indeed to wash a glass than to cleanse one's own soul. For the cleansing of an inanimate object only a little water and a towel are needed; but for purifying the soul one needs tears of love and the fire of purpose.

'There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. . . . Do ye not perceive that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? . . . That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the hearts of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.'

We may bathe in water from the spring or from the well; we may bathe for the body's sake or in obedience to ritual, but these ablutions cannot relieve us of that far more important obligation of cleansing our inner selves; and it is better to sit down to meat with unwashed hands than to repulse a hungry brother with hands thrice laved.

XXIII RESIST NOT EVIL . . .

Jesus, however, has not as yet reached the most amazing of His subversions.

'Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.'

These words, which are in direct opposition to the old law of retaliation, could not possibly be more explicit. The majority of men who call themselves Christians not only have never obeyed this new commandment, but have not even pretended to approve of it. The principle of non-resistance to evil constituted for innumerable believers the one intolerable and unacceptable point of Christianity. There are three ways with which man may meet violence —revenge, flight, turning the other cheek. The first is the barbarous principle of the law of retaliation, which, modified and disguised in our codes, still holds sway. We meet evil with evil either by our own act or by the acts of those officials whom civilization has appointed, our judges and jailers. The evil committed by these men who pronounce and execute sentence is thus added to the original offence. Not infrequently punishment reacts upon him who seeks vengeance, and then the terrible chain of retaliation stretches out to an appalling length. Evil is reversible; it eventually falls upon him who first perpetrated it, even though he may have been innocent of evil intentions. Whether between nations, in families, or between man and man, the first crime entails expiation and punishment which, with singular impartiality, falls alike upon offender and offended. The law of retaliation may indeed afford fierce satisfaction to him who is first attacked, but instead of cancelling evil it multiplies it.

Nor is flight a better policy. He who hides himself does but encourage his enemy. The fear of vengeance may, at times, stay the hand of the violent, but he who flies stimulates his enemy to pursue him, and he who gives himself for dead invites his enemy to slay him, and his own

weakness becomes the accomplice of that other's ferocity. Here again is evil engendering evil.

The only way, notwithstanding its apparent absurdity, is that which Jesus commands us to adopt. If one smite you on the cheek and you smite him in return, the next step will be blows, and consequently weapons will be drawn, thus bringing about, for some futile reason, perhaps, as much as the loss of a life. If you flee your enemy will pursue you, or, on meeting you, encouraged by his first success, he will assail you with redoubled violence. To turn the other cheek means that the second blow will not be inflicted: it means the severing of the first link of a chain of inevitable evils. The assailant who looks for resistance or flight is put to shame by his own victim. It is the last thing he has anticipated. He is confused, and his confusion humiliates him. He has time to look within himself; his victim's composure tempers down his wrath, giving him an opportunity to reflect. He cannot accuse you of fear because you stand ready to receive the second blow, offering your cheek for him to smite. Every man admires courage, especially moral courage, which is the rarest and most admirable form of all. The victim who neither offers resistance nor seeks to escape displays a greater strength of mind, greater self-command, a truer heroism than does he who, blind with rage, hurls himself upon his assailant and seeks to outdo him in violence. Impassibility, when it is not the impassiveness of the fool, gentleness, when it is not cowardice, fill with stupefaction even the basest souls, as do all extraordinary things. The brute is compelled to see that he is no ordinary man who possesses these qualities; and when the brute is not incited to follow up his advantage by an answering blow from his victim or by his cowardly flight, he, paralysed with astonishment, is filled with an almost timorous respect for this new power with which he was as yet unacquainted and which confounds him. And this more especially because one of the most powerful stimulants to violence is the satisfaction the assailant anticipates and eventually derives from a demonstration of rage on the part of his victim, from his

resistance and from the contest resulting from a first blow. Man is an agonistic animal. Non-resistance, however, puts an end to the assailant's satisfaction and enjoyment ; for he finds himself no longer confronted by an opponent but by a superior being, who says calmly : ' Have you not had enough ? Then here is my other cheek. Vent your rage to your heart's content. It is better that my face should suffer than my soul. You may cause me as much pain as you like, but you cannot rouse me to a wrath such as yours ; you cannot drive me to vie with you in your insane brutality ; you cannot coerce me into doing evil and then pleading in extenuation of my fault that I was the victim of violence.'

A power such as but few possess to control the passions, the nerves, and all the lower instincts is indispensable if we are to observe the letter of Jesus' precept. It is indeed a bitter and distasteful injunction, but Jesus never said that to follow Him was an easy matter. He never affirmed that it was possible to observe His commandments without painful sacrifice, without repeated and acute inner conflicts, without the renunciation of the old Adam and the birth of a new man.

The fruits of non-resistance, however, even though they may not always bring satisfaction, even though they wither when evil days again overtake us, are immeasurably superior to those of resistance or of flight. The manifestation of such unusual self-control, of which the ordinary individual is incapable, can have no conception ; the almost supernatural fascination of an attitude so unusual, so at variance with tradition and the common passions, this manifestation, this display of strength, this absurd miracle, as unexpected as are all miracles, as difficult to comprehend as are all marvels ; this example set by a normal able-bodied individual, who in outward appearance differs in no way from his fellow-men, but whose bearing is, so to speak, godlike, is that of one raised above other human beings, of one who dominates the passions that sway his fellow-men, who bears himself (he, a mere man) so differently from all other men ; this example, if it be oft repeated,

if its motive be not attributable to supine stupidity and it be accompanied by acts of physical courage when physical courage is a means of achieving good and not of spreading evil, wields a power the strength of which we, although we may be strongly imbued with ideas of retaliation and vengeance, can nevertheless form a conception. It is difficult, however, for us to realize the extent of this power, and we can never fully grasp it, because the manifestations of non-resistance have been all too few to enable us to form a thorough experience in support of what we know to be the fact.

If, however, this commandment of Christ's has been obeyed but seldom or not at all, it cannot be said to be impracticable, or still less to deserve rejection. It may be repugnant to human nature, but so also are all the greatest moral conquests. They stand for the salutary amputation of a part of our very self—for many, of the strongest of their inclinations—and it is but natural that we should quail before the threat of the knife.

But whether it please us or not, only by means of this precept of Jesus can the problem of violence be solved. Of all others it is the only one that does not add evil to evil, multiplying it a hundredfold, does not envenom the wound and prevent its healing. Only by its means can the pimple be prevented from becoming an abscess. To return a blow for a blow, to punish one crime by committing another, is to act upon the principle the malefactor himself obeys, is to degrade oneself to his level. To take refuge in flight is to humiliate oneself before him, and encourage him to take advantage of his first opportunity. It is vain to reason with one who is hostile and wrathful. But to reply by a simple act of submission, to offer one's breast to him who has dealt one a blow between the shoulders, to give a thousand to him who would rob one of a hundred, to bear three days with him who would torture one for an hour, is an act of supreme heroism notwithstanding its appearance of cowardice; an act so extraordinary as to disarm the most brutal of assailants by the irresistible majesty of what is divine. Only he who has triumphed

over himself can triumph over his enemies; only saints can subdue the fierce nature of the wolf; only he who has transformed his own spirit can transform the spirits of others and render this life less painful to all.

XXIV THAT WHICH IS AGAINST NATURE

It is repugnant to our nature not to resist violence. But it is the mission of Jesus to bring our nature to loathe to-morrow what pleases us to-day, and to love to-day what yesterday filled us with horror. Each of His words presupposes this total renewal of the human spirit. He does not hesitate to contradict our most deeply-rooted instincts and our most natural inclinations. He praises those things from which we all shrink, and condemns what we all seek to achieve. Not only does He confute what men teach—which often differs widely from what they really think and practise—but He is opposed to what they actually do, day by day.

Jesus does not believe in the perfection of the natural soul, which has been spoiled by the Fall. He believes in its future perfection, which it will achieve only through a radical subversion of its present state. His mission is to reform man, or rather to remake man. With Him a new race begins. He is the model, the prototype, the Adam of humanity remoulded and recast. Socrates sought to reform reason and Moses the law; others have been content to change a ritual, a code, a system, a science. But Jesus will not change one part of man only. The whole man, from head to foot, must be remade. That is to say, the inner man must be changed, the being who is the motive power and origin of all that is done and said on earth. There is nothing, therefore, that is outside of His province. He will make no concessions, will hold out no inducements. He will not compromise with our evil and imperfect nature; nor will He justify it by means of specious arguments as do the philosophers. One cannot serve both Jesus and nature. He who is with Jesus is against the old, brutish nature, he is striving to attain to

a nature that is angelic. All the rest amounts to naught but ashes and empty words.

Nothing is more common to all men than the greed of riches. The accumulation of wealth at any cost and even by the most shameful means has ever been accounted as a most delightful and respectable occupation. But those who will follow Me, as says Jesus, must relinquish all whatsoever they possess and be willing to exchange their visible and actual treasures for treasures of an invisible nature and of the future.

Every man looks forward with anxiety to the morrow; he is ever fearful lest he lose his foothold, lest there be not enough corn to last until the next harvest, and he trembles lest he be not able to procure sufficient clothing to cover himself and his children. But Jesus says: 'Take therefore no thought for the morrow. . . . Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'

Every man would be first even among his equals. In one way or another he seeks to rise above those who surround him. He wishes to command, to dominate, to appear greater, richer, wiser and handsomer than the rest. The whole history of man is epitomized in the dread of being second. But Jesus teaches: 'If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all. . . . But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.'

Vanity is another universal disease from which humanity suffers. It poisons even what little good man does, because it is usually for the purpose of making himself conspicuous that he performs virtuous deeds. He does evil in secret and good openly. But Jesus commands us to do the opposite: 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. . . . And when thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men. . . . Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. . . .

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face that thou appear not unto men to fast. . . .' We are never to do evil either in public or secretly, but when we do good we are to hide our act, that we may not appear to seek the approbation of our fellow-men.

The instinct of self-preservation is the strongest of all those that dominate us. We are capable of any act of infamy, cruelty or cowardice for the saving of this handful of living dust. But Jesus warns us that he who will save his life shall lose it. For what most men call life is not life, and he who forfeits his soul forfeits also the flesh that encloses it.

Each one of us is ever ready to pass a judgment upon his fellow-man; in so doing we feel ourselves superior to him, we feel ourselves better, more just, actually free from sin. To accuse another is like saying: 'We ourselves are not thus.' The hunchback is always the first to call attention to the crooked back of another. But Jesus says: 'Judge not and ye shall not be judged; condemn not and ye shall not be condemned; forgive and ye shall be forgiven.'

Each man is ready to proclaim himself truly a man, meaning thereby that he is austere-minded, experienced and wise; that he is a person of importance, one worthy of respect, and versed in all things, who reasons well and whose opinion commands attention. The words of one who is too outspoken are soon declared to be childish; a simple soul is scornfully termed a child. Yet when His disciples asked Him who were the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus answered: '. . . Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

The austere-minded, the pious, the pure and the Pharisee all carefully avoid the company of sinners, of the fallen, of the impure, and entertain at their board only such as they deem just. But Jesus is never weary of repeating that His mission is to sinners and not to the virtuous, to the wicked and not to the good; and He is not ashamed to sit at meat in the house of the publican and to allow

a harlot to anoint His feet. He who is truly stainless cannot be soiled by the impure, and the fear of staining Himself must not prevent Him from saving them from death and corruption.

Man's greed is such that he never misses one opportunity of taking as much as he possibly can from his neighbour, but he gives as little as possible in return. All seek to accumulate ; and praise of generosity is but a mask which mendicancy assumes for decency's sake. But Jesus declares that ' it is more blessed to give than to receive.'

We all detest most of our neighbours. We hate them on account of what they own, and of that which we covet and they do not give us, because they take no notice of us, because they differ from us—in a word, on account of their very existence. We actually reach the point of hating our own friends, even those who have conferred benefits upon us. But Jesus commands us to love our fellow-men, to love all mankind, even those who hate us.

He who fails to obey this commandment may not call himself a Christian. Even though he be ready to die, if he hates his murderer he has not right to call himself a Christian.

Self-love, which is the first and final cause of our hatred of others, comprehends all our other proclivities and passions. He who overcomes self-love and hatred of others is already a changed being. The rest is but the natural sequence and consequence of this change. Hatred of self and love of our enemies is the basis and the end of Christianity. It is the greatest victory over the old, fierce, blind and brutal Adam. Mankind cannot be reborn to the enjoyment of peace until he learns to love even those who offend him. To love our enemies is the only means that will enable us to banish from earth the last enemy.

XXV BEFORE LOVE

Those who refuse to acknowledge Christ, who, indeed, have every reason for not acknowledging Him (for in so doing they would be forced to deny their very selves, and,

being incapable of understanding how much they would gain by such a change, they fear rather to suffer loss, for they cling to what to them seems magnificence but is in reality but rubbish), those, we say, who refuse to acknowledge Christ long ago invented a learned and plausible excuse for not following Him. They boldly declare that He taught nothing new. His precepts, they tell us, were proclaimed both in the East and in the West centuries before His advent; either He stole them or He repeated them failing to see they were not His own. If He taught nothing new, then He is not as great as He is reputed; if He be not great He does not deserve attention, to admire Him is a mark of ignorance, to obey Him is insanity, to honour Him is to reveal oneself a simpleton.

These luminaries of ideal genealogy, however, do not say whether the teachings of Jesus, be they old or new, are to be accepted or rejected; they do not dare to pretend that it is nothing to have reconsecrated by death a great truth that had been forgotten, and never been put into practice; they do not take the trouble to ascertain whether there exist identity of spirit, or merely a simple assonance of sound, a vague resemblance of words between the teachings of Jesus and other teachings of an earlier date; and meanwhile they acknowledge neither the law of Jesus nor that of His supposed masters, but they tranquilly go on leading impure lives, as if the Gospel message had not been addressed to them as well as to all mankind.

When law was first established there ensued a period when those of the same blood loved one another; when the inhabitants of the same city lived on terms of toleration until one injured his neighbour; the stranger who was not an official guest had nothing to expect but hatred and extermination. In the family, there was somewhat of affection; within the city reigned approximate justice; but beyond the walls and the boundaries there was naught but inextinguishable hatred.

Voices were raised, in the course of centuries, demanding a little love for our neighbour, outside the family circle, between men who, although not of the same blood, belonged

to the same race; voices demanding justice not merely to the stranger but even to the enemy himself. This might have been the beginning of a wonderful progress, but these voices, raised at rare intervals weak and remote, were seldom heard, never listened to.

Four centuries before Christ a wise man of China, Me-Ti, wrote a book wherein he sought to convince men of the duty to love one another. 'The sage,' he said, 'who would better the world can better it only if he be intimately acquainted with the origin of its disorders; if he possesses not this knowledge he cannot improve it. . . . What is the origin of these disorders? They are the result of our want of love for one another. Servants and children fail to respect their masters and parents; children love not their parents, but themselves, and are ready to inflict injury upon them if it be to their own interest. A younger brother loves himself but not his elder brother; subjects love not their princes but themselves. . . . The father is severe with his son, the elder brother with the younger, the prince with his subjects. The father loves not his son but himself, and is willing to injure him if it be to his own advantage. . . . Thus throughout the earth do wicked men love their own houses but do not respect the houses of their neighbours, which they pillage that their own kin may be enriched. Thieves love their own bodies but have no love for mankind, and steal from others for the good of their own bodies. If thieves considered the bodies of others as they do their own, who would steal? All thieves would disappear. . . . Could we but attain to reciprocal, universal love, states would no longer strive one against another, families would live in peace, thieves would disappear, princes, subjects, parents and children would become respectful and indulgent, and the world would be a better place.'

To Me-Ti love, or, to translate more accurately, a benevolence composed of respect and indulgence, is the cement whereby the citizen and the state may be more closely held together. It is a remedy for the evils arising from the necessity of dwelling together—a sort of social panacea.

'Meet violence with gentleness,' is the mysterious Lao-Sze's timid suggestion. But courtesy is merely prudence or meekness, and not love.

His contemporary, the venerable Confucius, taught a doctrine that, according to his disciple, Tseng-Sze, was but that of righteousness of purpose and the obligation of loving our neighbour as ourself. Let it be observed, however, that he says 'our neighbour' and not one who is 'far away,' is a stranger, an enemy. We are to love him *as* ourself, not *better* than ourself. Confucius preaches filial affection and general benevolence as necessary in order that kingdoms may prosper, but he forgets to condemn hate. In the *Lun-Yu* itself, which contains the words of Tseng-Sze, we find others, taken from the *Ta-Hio*, the more ancient Confucian text: 'Only the just man is human and capable of loving or *hating his fellow-man as is fitting*.'

His contemporary, Gautama, preached love of our fellow-men, of all men, even of the most miserable and despicable. But we are also to cherish the same sentiment for animals, for the most insignificant insect, for everything that has life. In Buddhism man's love for man is but a helpful means of totally eradicating love of self, which is the main, the strongest support of existence. Buddha wished to abolish suffering, and saw no other way of accomplishing this than to drown the individual soul in the universal, in the nirvana, in nihility. The Buddhist does not love his brother for love of him, but for love of self, and in order that he may avoid suffering and advance the more easily along the path that leads to extinction. His universal love is cold, venal and egotistical; it is a form of stoical indifference to both pain and joy.

In Egypt every human being carried with him to the grave a copy of the *Book of the Dead*, which contained a species of anticipatory apology for the soul when it should appear before the tribunal of Osiris. The deceased sang his own praises therein: 'I have not starved any one! I have caused no tears to flow! I have not committed murder! I have not caused any one's death by treachery . . .! I have given bread to the hungry, and water to

them that thirsted, clothes to the naked, a boat to him who could not pursue his journey ; I have offered sacrifices to the gods and provided funeral banquets in honour of the dead.' Here we have justice and deeds of charity (did they all really perform them ?), but there is no question of love, least of all, of love for our enemies. If we would know how the Egyptians treated their enemies, we have but to examine the inscriptions of the great King Pepi the First, wherein it is said : ' . . . this army went in peace ; it penetrated at will into the country of the Hirushaitu. This army went in peace ; it destroyed their country. This army went in peace ; it cut down all their fig-trees and their vines. This army went in peace ; it set fire to all of their houses. This army went in peace ; it slaughtered their soldiers by thousands. This army went in peace ; it brought away their men, women and children in great numbers, and this gave His Holiness greater delight than all else.'

Zoroaster also left a law for the people of Iran. This law commanded the followers of Ahura-Mazdah to be merciful to their co-religionists. They were to clothe the naked and feed the hungry labourer. We have not yet got beyond material charity towards them who belong to us, who serve us and are our neighbours. Of love there is no word.

It has been said that Jesus added nothing to the Mosaic law ; that He did but repeat the old commandments with a stronger emphasis. ' Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. . . .' Thus spoke Moses in Exodus. ' And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee ; *thine eye shall have no pity upon them.* . . .'

These words occur in Deuteronomy. A step farther and we reach love : ' Thou shalt neither vex a stranger nor oppress him ; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' This is a beginning. Thou shalt not vex a stranger because of the time when thou thyself wast a stranger. But the stranger who dwells in our midst is not an enemy, and to do him no evil does not necessarily

mean to do him good. Exodus ordains that he shall not be oppressed; Leviticus[1] is more generous: 'And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself. . . .' It is always the stranger dwelling in your midst, becoming as one of you, becoming your friend.

In the same book we read: 'Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children *of thy people*.' This, again, is going a step farther. Do no evil to him who offends you provided he be of your own people. Here we have reached, not pardon indeed, but at least a forbearance that is praiseworthy although it be extended only to our neighbour.

'But thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Thy neighbour, thy fellow-townsman who is thy racial brother and may be of service to thee. But how about thine enemy? There is something concerning him also. 'If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldst forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.' O admirable forbearance of the ancient Jew! It would be so sweet to drive the donkey farther afield and make it more difficult for his master to find him? And when one finds an over-burdened donkey lying in the roadway, how one would like to laugh in one's beard and pass on! But the ancient Hebrew's heart is not hardened to this extent. The ass is too valuable a beast in that land and time. No one can get along without at least one donkey in the stable; every one has a donkey—friends and enemies alike. To-day yours has escaped, but to-morrow it may be mine. Let us not seek to avenge ourselves on the animal even though the master himself be a beast; for if I make myself his enemy he will become mine. Let us set him a good example by which we may reasonably hope he will profit. Let us drive his donkey home;

[1] The author says Deuteronomy, but the following quotations occur in Leviticus.—Translator's Note.

let us help him readjust its harness and the load. Let us do unto others what we hope others will do unto us; and in performing our good deed let us mercifully put aside all unkind thoughts, as we bend over the ears and back of the long-suffering ass!

All this, however, is not enough. The ancient Hebrew, indeed, has already put forth a tremendous effort to bring himself to take thought for his enemy's beast. But compensation for this is to be found in the Psalms, that teem with abuse of the enemy and with frantic appeals to the Lord to persecute and destroy him. 'As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. Let burning coals fall upon them; let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits that they rise not up again.' In a world thus constituted it is but natural that Saul should marvel that his enemy David does not slay him, and that Job should praise himself for not having rejoiced over the misfortunes of his enemy. Only in the closing chapters of the book of Proverbs do we find certain passages that suggest the words of Christ. 'Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.' The enemy must be punished, but by stronger hands than thine. The anonymous moralist, however, finally reaches charity: 'If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink.' Here is real progress. Mercy does not stop at the ox, but is to be extended to its master as well. But certainly the marvellous fountains of love contained in the Sermon on the Mount cannot have had their source in these few, timid maxims, hidden away in a corner of the Scriptures.

But, it is argued, there is Hillel, the rabbi Hillel, the great Hillel, master of Gamaliel, Hillel the Babylonian. This famous Pharisee lived a few years before Jesus and taught, it is said, the same things that Jesus Himself preached later on. He was a liberal-minded Jew, a reasonable Pharisee and intelligent rabbi—but why a Christian? It is true that he once said: 'Do that to no man which thou hatest; herein is all the law. . . .' These are brave words spoken by a master of the old law, but still how

remote from those of Him who subverted the old law! The precept is negative: *Do not.* It does not say: Return good for evil, but merely, Do not unto others (and these others are certainly one's companions, fellow-townsmen, servants and friends) that which thou wouldst hate were it done unto thee. It is a gentle admonition not to inflict injury, but by no means an injunction to love. In fact Hillel's descendants were the Talmudists, who brought the law to stagnation in the boundless marsh of casuistry; the descendants of Jesus, on the other hand, were the Martyrs who called down blessings upon the heads of their executioners.

Philo also, who was an Alexandrian Jew, some twenty years older than Jesus, a metaphysician much inclined towards Platonism, left an unimportant treatise on the love of man for man. But Philo, with all his talents, with all his mystical and Messianic speculations, remains like Hillel always, a theorist, a man of the pen, the inkpot, the study and the book; a man of systems, standpoints, abstractions and classifications. His dialectic method consists in mustering words by the thousand in battle array; but he is incapable of finding the one word that would instantly dissipate the past and unite all hearts. He discoursed more of love than did Christ Himself, but he was incapable of uttering—nor would he indeed have understood it—what Christ said to his unlettered friends upon the Mount.

Can it be, we ask ourselves, that in Greece (that wellspring from which all have drunk) the love of one's neighbour be unknown? Those with leanings towards paganism, who are opposed to the 'Palestinian superstition,' are wont to declare that Greece contains all things. As regards spiritual things, they say, that country is the China of the West, the mother of every invention.

In his *Ajax*, Sophocles shows us the famous Odysseus mourning over the enemy he has reduced to dire extremity. In vain does Athena herself—the sacred owl, impersonating Hellenic wisdom—assure him that the pleasantest laugh of all is that at our enemy's expense. Ulysses remains

unconvinced. 'I am filled with pity for him,' he says, 'because I see him plunged into such misery, and the victim of a cruel fate. When I look upon him I think of myself; for I perceive that we are naught but phantoms and flitting shadows, all of us who draw breath. . . . It is wrong to injure a dying man, even though we may hate him. . . .' It seems to me that we are still a long way off! The astute Ulysses is not sufficiently astute to hide the reason for his unnatural distress. He pities his enemy because he is reminded of himself, because he cannot help but reflect that he also might be equally unfortunate, and he forgives him because he sees that he is undone and near unto death.

The son of Sophroniscus the sculptor, one wiser still than Ulysses, was among the many who faced the problem of the attitude a righteous man should maintain towards his enemy; but one is surprised, on studying the texts, to discover two Socrates, holding different opinions. The Socrates of Xenophon frankly accepts the common view that our friends are to be treated with consideration and our enemies subjected to unkindness. Indeed it is best to be beforehand with our enemies in inflicting injury. 'That man seems to me worthy of praise,' he says, 'who forestalls his enemies by ill-treating them, and his friends by being first in rendering them service.' But the Socrates of Plato does not share the general opinion. To Crito he says: 'To none must we render injustice for injustice or evil for evil, no matter what injury they may have inflicted upon us.' He expresses the same sentiment in the *Republic*, and strengthens it by adding that to wreak vengeance upon the wicked does not make them more virtuous. But Socrates is dominated by the idea of justice and not by the sentiment of love. Under no circumstances may the just man do evil, but let it be observed that he must abstain from so doing not out of affection for his enemy, but out of respect for himself. The sinner must punish himself; if he fails to do so the infernal judges will punish him after death.

Plato's pupil, Aristotle, quietly reverts to the old idea.

In his *Ethics* he says to Nicomachus : ' He who suffers injury and does not retaliate is cowardly and slavish.'

In Greece, therefore, the seeker of precedents to Christianity will find but little material.

Those who deny Christ and would have us believe that Christianity existed before Him have discovered a rival of Jesus in Rome itself, in the very household of Cæsar himself. This is Seneca, the spiritual director of the young lordlings of the beau-monde of his day, and their guide towards reformed stoicism. He is the aristocratic philosopher who has no pity for the sufferings of the humble ; the rich man who despises riches, but clings to them nevertheless ; who prates of equality between the free man and the slave and is himself a slave-owner ; the clever dissector of cases, scruples, evils, actual vice and approved virtue ; he who turned the ancient, infatuated but limpid stream of Chrysippus' doctrine into the channel of the ' exquisite.' Seneca, they tell us, was a Christian without knowing it while Christ was still alive. In fact, in his all too voluminous writings, many of which were composed after the death of Christ (for it was not until the year 65 that he put an end to his life), the searchers have discovered passages wherein he declares that ' the wise man does not seek vengeance but forgets injury ' ; that ' if we would imitate the gods we must be kind even to those who are ungrateful, because the sun shines upon the wicked as upon the virtuous, and the sea carries even the corsairs upon its bosom.' He also says that ' we must succour our enemies with the hand of friendship.' But the philosopher's ' forgetting ' is not ' forgiving,' and ' to succour ' may be to bestow charity, but it is not to love. The self-righteous man, the Stoic, the Pharisee, the philosopher proud of his philosophy, the just man confident of his own rectitude, may scorn the insults of the weak and the attacks of their adversaries. In order to display their own magnanimity and gain popular favour, they may even deign to offer a loaf of bread to a starving enemy, thus humiliating him still more bitterly from the height of their own perfection. But that loaf is one raised with the leaven of vanity, and

the hand that offers it is incapable of drying a tear or binding up a wound.

The ancient world knew not Love. It knew passion for woman, affection for a friend, justice for a fellow-countryman, hospitality for the stranger; but with Love it was unacquainted. Zeus protects pilgrims and strangers; no one who knocks at the door of a Greek will be refused meat, a cup of wine and a couch. The poor will be housed, the sick cared for, those who mourn consoled with appropriate, sounding words. But the ancients will never understand Love—love that suffers all things and accepts any sacrifice, love for all who suffer and stand alone, love for the humble, the poor, the outcast, the downtrodden and the derelict; love for all, which makes no distinction between the fellow-countryman and the stranger, between the pleasing and the repulsive, between the criminal and the philosopher, the brother and the foe.

In the last canto of the Iliad we see a sorrowing old man, a father who kisses the hand of his enemy, of the terrible enemy, murderer of his own children, of him who but a few days before had slain his favourite son. Old King Priam, the ruler of the profaned city, the master of vast wealth, the sire of fifty children, kneels at the feet of Achilles, the greatest hero and the most unhappy man of Greece, son of a sea-goddess, the avenger of Patroclus, the slayer of Hector. The old man's white head is bowed before the undaunted youth of the victor, and Priam weeps for his murdered son, the strongest, handsomest, and best-beloved of his fifty children, and kisses the hand that dealt the fatal blow. 'Thou also,' he says to the conqueror, 'hast an aged, feeble father who is far away and unprotected. By the love thou bearest him I beseech thee to give me the body of my son.'

The fierce, the insane Achilles, Achilles the murderer, gently puts the supplicant aside and bursts into tears. And the two enemies, the conquered and the conqueror, the father who has lost his son and the son who will never again embrace his father, the hoary-headed old man and the fair-haired youth mingle their tears, united for the

first time in suffering. Those about them witness the scene with amazement, and we ourselves, although at a distance of thirty centuries, cannot fail to be affected by that grief.

Priam's kiss, however, contained neither forgiveness nor love. The King bowed down before Achilles because, standing alone and as his enemy, he was proffering a request that was not only unusual but one the victor could hardly grant. Had he not been divinely inspired he would never have stirred from Ilion. Nor does Achilles weep for the dead Hector and the mourning Priam, for the mighty one who has been brought low, for the enemy who has been forced to kiss the hand of a murderer. He weeps for his lost friend, for Patroclus, dear to him above all others, for Peleus left desolate at Phthia, for his father whom he will never embrace again, well aware that the days of his young life are numbered. And he restores the body of his son to the father—the body he has dragged for days in the dust—not because his thirst for vengeance is assuaged but because of Zeus' desire that it should be restored. Each weeps for himself. Priam's kiss is a dire necessity. Achilles' act of restitution is obedience to the gods. In this most noble and heroic part of the ancient world there is no room for that love which destroys and takes the place of hate; for love that is stronger than all hate, more ardent, more unyielding, more enduring; for love that is not forgetfulness of evil but love of evil—for evil is a greater misfortune for him who does it than for him who suffers it—there is no room here for love of one's enemy.

Before Jesus no one spoke of this love; not one among all those who discoursed of love. Until the *Sermon on the Mount* was preached love such as this was still unknown.

This is the greatness and newness of Jesus. His greatness eternally new, new to us still, since we have not heard it nor endeavoured to imitate it, and obeyed it as yet. But it will always remain Eternal as Truth.

XXVI LOVE ONE ANOTHER

'Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

A few sentences, straightforward, simple and unadorned; but they constitute the Magna Charta of the new race, of the third race so far still unborn. The first was that of the lawless brute, and the name it bore was War; the second was that of the barbarian partially civilized by the law, and its highest ideal was justice. This is the race that still prevails; for justice has not yet overcome war and law has not yet cast out bestiality. The third race will be that of the true man, who shall not be just only but holy as well; who shall have in himself naught of the brute, but be like unto God.

Jesus has but a single purpose—to change men by means of love, change the brutes into saints. The enchantress Circe, the satanic spouse who appears in the fascinating pages of mythology, changed heroes into beasts by means of carnal pleasures. Jesus, the anti-satanical, the anti-Circean (*l'antisatana l'anticirce*), rescues man from animalism by a power stronger in itself than that of any form of pleasure. Only by striving to become like unto God can we further this undertaking which seems hopeless to us whose nature contains still much of the animal, to us who are still incomplete beings. To become more holy we must keep what is divine ever in view. Be holy because God is holy. Be perfect because God is perfect.

This commandment is not new to the heart of man. Satan said in Eden: 'Ye shall be as gods.' Jehovah said to His judges: 'Be godlike; be just as God is just.' But it is no longer a question of possessing godlike wisdom; it is not even sufficient to be just because God is just. He is no longer wisdom and justice alone; through Jesus He is become our Father, He is become Love. Does not this earth of His bring forth flowers and corn even for the assassin? And the blasphemer, on opening his eyes in the morning, does he not behold the same radiant sun that warms the folded hands of them who pray in the fields? The Father cherishes alike the child who departs from Him and the child who remains faithful, the one who obeys Him at home and the other who blasphemes against Him at the tavern. The Father may be afflicted, may suffer and shed tears, but no one will ever be able to make Him alter His attitude of affection, or induce Him to seek vengeance.

And we who are infinitely inferior to God, and are but creatures doomed to perish, who scarcely remember the day just elapsed and have no knowledge of the morrow—have not we, base and unhappy beings that we are—a far greater reason to deal mercifully with our brothers in misfortune, as God deals with us?

God is the supreme hypostasis of our ideal, of our desire to be. To forsake Him, to withdraw from Him, not to be ourselves what we entreat Him to be with us, is not this to increase the distance that already separates us from our one purpose, to render impossible perpetually, hopelessly unattainable that happiness for which we were created; which we hold to be the object of our very existence; which we have imagined, dreamed of, desired, sought after, invoked, but pursued in vain through all the phases of that false happiness which is not of God? '*Soyons des Dieux!*' Bossuet exclaims. '*Soyons des Dieux, il nous le permet pour l'imitation de sa sainteté!*'

Who will refuse to be like unto God, to be with God? *Dii estis!* Godliness is within us, but animalism encompasses and constricts it and prevents our development.

Who would not be God ? O man ! are you indeed content to be what you are to-day ? A being half-man, half-beast, a centaur devoid of vigour, a siren without charm, a faun-faced, goat-legged demon ? Are you, then, so well satisfied with your hybrid, imperfect humanity, with your ill-subdued animalism, with your holiness that still remains but an aspiration ? Do you feel that man's existence as it was yesterday, as it is to-day, is so delightful, so satisfactory, so blissful that there is no need to seek to alter it, to change it completely, to make it the opposite of what it is and more like that which, for centuries, we have imagined to be the future life in the world above ? Would it not be possible to transform this life, make this world more divine, and finally bring down to it heaven itself and its laws ?

This new life, this world at once earthly and celestial, is the Kingdom of Heaven ; and in order to make this kingdom possible we must celestialize, deify, superhumanize ourselves (*incielare, indiare, trasumanare noi stessi*) ; we must become like unto God, we must imitate God.

The secret of imitating God is Love. The sure way to attain to transhumanization is through Love ; love of man for his fellow-man, of the friend and of the enemy. If such love be impossible, then our salvation is also impossible. If it be repugnant to us, that is a sign that happiness is also repugnant to us ; if it be absurd, then our hope of redemption is but an absurdity.

Common reason deems it madness to love our enemies. It follows, then, that in madness lies our salvation. To love our enemies is like hating ourselves. It follows, then, that we shall attain to bliss only if we hate ourselves.

Having reached our present state, nothing should have power to fill us with dismay. We have tried and experimented in all directions. We cannot say that we have not had time to try everything. For innumerable centuries have we not been experimenting and re-experimenting in this world ? We have tried ferocity, and blood did but call for more blood. We have tried sensualism, and its pleasures did but leave a bitter taste in our mouths and a

thirst that was torment. We have exhausted our strength and indulged in the most refined, the most perverse forms of pleasure, only to find ourselves in the end stretched, bruised and despairing, upon a couch that filled us with loathing. We have experimented with the law ; we have violated it, altered and again violated it, and justice has failed to bring us satisfaction. We have experimented with reason, weighed all creation, numbered the stars, described the plants, and all things living and dead ; we have connected them by means of the frail thread of speculation ; we have transfigured them in the magic vapours of metaphysics and all to no purpose, for all things have remained unchanged, eternally unaltered, and incapable both of satisfying us or of renewal. Names and numbers have failed to appease our hunger, and the wisest among us have ended by a weary confession of their ignorance. We have tried art, and our impotence has brought even the strongest to the verge of despair ; for the absolute does not reside in forms, diversity overflows from the unique, and matter that has been moulded cannot retain the ephemeral. We have tried riches and found ourselves the poorer ; force and found ourselves weaker than before. Nowhere has our spirit found rest ; our bodies have not reposed in any grateful shadow, and the heart of man, ever seeking, ever experiencing fresh deception, is become older, more weary, more empty, because in no possession has it found peace, in no pleasure, in no conquest has he found pure joy or true happiness.

Jesus proposes His experiment—the last. The experiment of Love. That which no one has carried out as yet, that which very few have attempted to follow but for a brief period in their lives ; the most difficult experiment, the most contrary to our instincts, but the only one capable of fulfilling its promise.

Man, as nature makes him, thinks of self only, loves himself only. Little by little and by dint of slow and painful effort, he succeeds in developing an ephemeral fondness for his woman and for his children, and brings himself to tolerate the presence of his companions in the

chase, of his accomplices in murder and war. Sometimes, but rarely, he may love a friend. It is easier, however, for him to hate one who loves him ; and he will never love one who hates him.

It is precisely for this reason that Jesus commands us to love our enemies. In order to remake man completely, to create a new man, the strongest instincts of the old Adam must be uprooted. Love of self is the root of all misfortune, of all massacres, of all the world's miseries. If the old Adam is to be overcome, love of self must be cast out, and that love which is most contrary to man's actual nature must take its place. The total transformation of man is such a sublime absurdity that it may be achieved only by means that are absurd. It is an extraordinary, an unnatural and insane undertaking, that can be brought to accomplishment only by means that are insane, unnatural and extraordinary—insanity only against nature, its laws and its order.

Up to the present man has loved himself alone, he has returned hatred for hatred ; the future man, who shall inhabit the Kingdom, must hate himself and love his enemy. To love one's neighbour as oneself is but an inadequate formula, a mere concession to universal egotism. For he who loves himself cannot love others with a perfect love, and finds himself, of necessity, opposed to others. The one solution of the problem is to hate oneself. We are all overfond of self, we admire and flatter ourselves too much. In order to overcome this blind love we must bring ourselves to see our own baseness, our nothingness and iniquity. Self-contempt is humility, and consequently the beginning of repentance and ultimate perfection. Only the humble will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, because they alone realize how great is the distance that separates them therefrom. We are roused to resentment against others because we believe that they seek to injure our precious *ego*, that they do not sufficiently respect us ; let us slay our brother because we believe he obstructs *our* path ; let us steal to promote *our own* well-being ; let us commit sins of the flesh for the pleasure of *our* bodies. Envy, the

mother of rivalry, of strife and of war, is but the pain we experience because another possesses more than we do, possesses what we do not. Pride is the manifestation of our conviction that we are something more than others, that we are richer, know more, and are of greater importance. All these things that religions, morality and the laws call sin, vice and crime are the outcome of this love of self, of this hatred of others which is born of one unrighteous sentiment, one absorbing and selfish love.

What right have we to hate our enemies, when we are guilty of the same fault for which we hate them—that is to say, of hatred ?

What right have we to hate them even though they have done evil, even though we believe them to be wicked, we who ourselves have, as a rule, been guilty of the same crimes and are tainted by the same vices ?

What right have we to hate them when, generally speaking, we ourselves are responsible for their hatred of us ; when we have incurred their hatred by the innumerable errors our monstrous self-love has led us to commit ?

He who hates is unhappy and is the first to suffer. Were it but in indemnification of the suffering of which we are so often the cause, direct or indirect, we should meet hatred with love, bitterness with benevolence.

Our enemy is also our saviour, and we should be eternally grateful to him. He alone sees and frankly proclaims what is ugly and base in us. He recalls us to our true selves, rouses us to a consciousness of our moral poverty, which consciousness is an essential principle of the new birth. Our sense of gratitude alone should be enough to make us love our enemy.

He needs love—needs our love. He who loves already has his joy and his reward. He does not need love in return. But he who hates is wretched—he hates precisely because he is wretched ; hatred, indeed, is the bitter outlet for his suffering. We are partially responsible for this suffering, and even though we may refuse to recognize our part of responsibility—presumptuous and self-confident

as we are—it is our duty to seek, by our love, to ease his pain, to pacify him, to make him better, to convert him also to this bliss of love. By loving our enemy we shall learn to know him better; knowing him better our love for him will increase. We love well only that which we are thoroughly acquainted with; love renders its object lucid. If we love our enemy his soul will become more clearly revealed to us, and the deeper our understanding of him becomes the more clearly shall we perceive that he has a right to our compassion, a right to our love. For every enemy is an unrecognized brother. We often hate those who most closely resemble us. Something of ourselves, of which we are perhaps unconscious, is in our enemy also, and may well be the cause of our dislike of him. By loving our enemy we purify our own spirit and exalt his. A light that liberates may be born of a hatred that separates. The greatest of blessings may be the outcome of the worst of evils.

It is for this reason that Jesus commands us to invert the relations that now prevail amongst men. When man shall love what he hates to-day and hate what to-day he loves, he will be a different being and life will become the opposite to what it now is. And as life to-day is made up of evil and despair, the new life, being its opposite in all things, will be goodness and happiness. For the first time bliss will be ours; the Kingdom of Heaven will begin on earth. We shall find Eden once more, and for all eternity; that Eden which was lost because the first human beings sought the difference between good and evil. But with the absolute love, that is equal to that of the Father, good and evil will no longer exist. Evil is overcome, destroyed by good. Eden was love—love between God and man; between man and woman. The love of every man for all men will be the new earthly Paradise, the Paradise regained. In this sense Christ leads Adam back to the gates of Eden and teaches him how to re-enter the garden and dwell therein for ever.

The sons of Adam have not believed the Lord's word. They have repeated His precepts without obeying them;

and man, because of his spiritual deafness, still groans in an earthly hell which, from century to century, becomes more infernal. And these conditions must endure until the torment becomes so atrocious and unbearable that the hatred of hate shall be born in the hearts of the damned themselves; until, in the frenzy of their despair, the very dying themselves shall rebel and be filled with love for them who strike them down. Then at last, out of the all-encompassing gloom of suffering there shall shine forth the pure radiance of a miraculous springtide.

XXVII THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Apostles asked Jesus for a prayer. He had already told them, as He had told every one, to make their petitions short, to pray in secret; but they were not satisfied with the prayers prescribed by the learned but indifferent priests of the Temple. They wanted a prayer of their own, that should remain as a token among the followers of the Lord.

Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer for the first time on the Mountain. It is the only prayer He recommended; one of the simplest in the world; the most deeply significant that man addresses to his God; a prayer composed of plain words, untheological, neither bold nor servile. The most beautiful of all prayers.

But although it may be simple it is not understood by all men. The mechanical recital of it with the tongue and lips; the formal, ritualistic, careless, indifferent repetition of these words for thousands of years, has reduced it to a chain of syllables, of which the original, intrinsic meaning is lost. Reading it again to-day, however, word for word, as we would read some new text for the first time, it loses its accustomed, ritualistic character and stands forth once more in all the purity of its primal significance.

Our Father: then we are indeed descended from Thee; Thou lovest us as Thy children, from Thee no evil shall come to us.

Which art in heaven—in a region beyond our earth, in a sphere opposed to matter, therefore in the Spirit, and

also in that minute but eternal part of the Spirit which is the human soul.

Hallowed be thy name. We must not adore Thee with our lips only ; we must also be worthy of Thee, draw nearer to Thee with an ever-increasing love. For Thou art no longer the Avenger and the Lord of Battles, but the Father whose teachings are happiness and peace.

Thy kingdom come : the Kingdom of Heaven, of the Spirit, of Love ; the kingdom of the Gospel.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. May the law of goodness and perfection dominate in the Spirit and in Matter, throughout the visible and the invisible universe.

Give us this day our daily bread, because our material body, which is the necessary support of the spirit, has need of daily sustenance. We do not ask for riches, which are but a harmful encumbrance, but only for that little which is indispensable if life is to be sustained, if we are to become more worthy of the life that has been promised us. Man does not live by bread alone, but without that crust the soul which inhabits the body would not be nourished by those other things that are more precious than bread.

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Forgive us because we pardon others. Thou art our eternal and sole creditor, and never shall we be able to repay our debt unto Thee. But remember, O Lord ! that it costs our wicked nature far more to condone the indebtedness of but one of our debtors than it costs Thee to cancel the record of all we owe Thee.

Lead us not into temptation. We are weak, still enslaved by what is of the flesh, of this world which at times appears so lovely to us and invites us to indulge in all the weaknesses of infidelity. Help us, that we find not the way to conversion too difficult and our struggle too strenuous, and that our entrance into the Kingdom be not too long delayed.

Deliver us from evil. Thou who art in heaven and hast power over all evil, over that unconquerable and hostile matter by which we are surrounded and from which it is at all times difficult for us to free ourselves ! Help us, Thou who art the enemy of Satan, the negation of matter !

Our salvation depends upon this victory over evil —evil that is ever springing up afresh because it will never be overcome entirely until *all* shall have conquered it. With thee for our ally the final victory will be less remote.

The Lord's Prayer ends with these words. It contains no trace of that sickening adulation of the prayers of the Eastern peoples; no long string of hyperbolical praises that might as well be the invention of a dog whose canine instinct fawns upon the master who, providing him with food, allows him to live. Nor does it contain any trace of the Psalmist's querulous and complaining supplications, any taint of him who asks God's help in all things, and more often in temporal than in spiritual things; who raises his voice in lamentation if the harvest be not satisfactory, if his fellow-townsmen fail to treat him with respect; who evokes plagues and thunderbolts upon the heads of his enemies whom he himself is unable to overcome.

The only praise this prayer of Jesus' contains resides in the word Father. This praise leads to one obligation: a token of love. Of this Father we ask a crust for which we are willing to work, for we must labour to proclaim the Kingdom. Besides the crust we crave that same forgiveness which we grant to our enemies, and finally we ask for His powerful aid in combating evil which is the common enemy of all mankind, the blank wall that prevents us from entering the Kingdom.

He who prays in the words of the Lord's Prayer is neither proud nor does he humiliate himself. He addresses his Father in the tender and intimate accents of quiet confidence, he speaks to Him almost as to an equal. He is sure of His love and knows that the Father will understand his needs without long discourses. 'For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him,' Jesus tells us.

This most beautiful of all prayers is also a daily reminder of all we lack in order to become like unto God.

After He had proclaimed the new law of the imitation of God, Jesus came down from the mountain.

One cannot always remain upon the mountain-top. Scarcely have we reached the highest pinnacle than we are doomed to come down. Of necessity, we are inevitably obliged to descend. Every ascension involves a descent; a promise to return to lower regions; a compromise with redescent. Ascension must be paid for by descent; expiated, discounted, indemnified by descent. The sadness of the descent is the price that must be paid for the joy of ascension. The delight of the ascent compensates beforehand for the grief of the descent.

He who has a message to deliver must make himself heard; if he speak always upon the heights, few will remain with him—the air is chill upon the heights for them who are not all fire—and his voice will reach but few. He who is come to give cannot pretend that men, with their weak lungs, tired hearts and flabby muscles, shall follow him to the mountain-top, struggling painfully up the steep slopes. He must seek them out in the plains, in the houses where they forgather; in order to uplift them he must come down to their level.

Jesus is well aware that if the Good Tidings are to be spread successfully, lofty sermons delivered in high places will not suffice. He knows the necessity of using words going straight to the point, that would more closely resemble facts, evoke images and relate events. In a word, that would be practically like the very act itself; and He knows also that not even this will be sufficient.

The simple, the coarse and rough people, the crowd of common people who follow after Jesus, is composed of men who live amidst material things, of men who reach spiritual things—(how slowly, and at what cost)—only by means of evident signs, material proofs and symbols. They cannot grasp a spiritual truth if it be not enwrapped, incorporated in what is material, if it be not accompanied by material testimony, moral proof and counter-proof.

A simile appealing to the senses may lead them to moral revelation; to them a miracle will be the confirmation of a new truth, of a contested mission.

Sermons made up of axioms and aphorisms could not satisfy the imaginative minds of these Orientals. Therefore Jesus resorted to poetry and the marvellous. He performed miracles and spoke in parables.

The miracles recorded by the Evangelists constitute one of the principal reasons why so many modern seekers have turned away from Christ and the Gospel. They cannot believe in the Miracle—therefore the Gospels lie; and if the Gospels lie on so many different occasions, how can they have trust in them? Jesus cannot have possibly raised the dead—*ergo* His words are worthless.

Those who reason thus (and they reason ill, indeed, for only a doctrine can lend value to a miracle, but a miracle does not always prove the truth of a doctrine) attach to the miracles a far greater importance and significance than Jesus Himself had ever lent them.

Had these critics read the four Gospels attentively they would have perceived that *He was often reluctant to perform miracles*; that He often avoided performing them, and did not account this divine power of His as one of supreme importance.

Whenever Jesus has a good reason for doing so He refuses to perform a miracle, and it is only when pressed to do so that He yields in order to reward the faith of them who beseech Him. But on His own behalf, or for His own salvation, He never resorts to a miracle. When Satan tempted Him in the desert He did not do so, nor when they attempted to slay Him at Nazareth, nor in the Garden of Olives when they came to seize Him, nor even upon the Cross when they defied Him to save Himself. His power is to be used for others, for the good of His mortal brethren.

Yet they persisted in asking Him for a sign from heaven that should convince the incredulous that His word was Truth indeed. 'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas.' What is it, then, that sign?

The Evangelists, who wrote after the Resurrection, declare that Jonas, who came forth from the whale's belly after three days, represents Jesus who, after three days, came forth from the sepulchre. But the continuation of the lesson shows that Jesus meant something else as well. 'The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; because *they repented at the preaching of Jonas*; and behold a greater than Jonas is here.' Nineveh asked for no miracles; the word alone was sufficient to convert her. Those who are not converted by the word of Jesus (which proclaims infinitely greater truths) are inferior to the Ninevites, to idolaters and barbarians.

You must not believe on Me only because I work miracles, but remember that faith—which is all the more perfect and exalted if it be not sustained by miracles—can *also* perform them. Hearts that are hardened and are closed to truth will not be converted even by the greatest of miracles: 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.' The cities where He worked His greatest wonders have forsaken Him. 'Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.'

All may perform wonders that may appear similar to miracles, even sorcerers and charlatans can do so. At one time a certain Simon worked miracles in Samaria, and even the disciples of the Pharisees could do as much. But these are of no account. To enter the kingdom it is not sufficient to have performed miracles. 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, *ye that work iniquity*.' It is not enough to cast out demons in others if we have not cast out the demon by which we ourselves are possessed—the demon of pride and of greed.

Even after the death of Jesus others will rise up and perform miracles. 'For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and great wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.' I have warned you. Do not believe in these signs and wonders until the advent of the Son of Man. The miracles of the false prophets do not prove the truth of their words. For all of these reasons Jesus refrained, whenever possible, from performing any miracle; but He could not always resist the prayers of sufferers, and there were times when His pity forestalled their entreaties. For the miracle is the power of faith, and great was the faith of His believers. Often, however, as soon as He had healed a sufferer He ordered him to keep secret the fact: 'And He charged them that they tell no man.'

Those who reject Christ's truth because they are shocked by His miracles should ponder the pregnant words He addressed to Thomas: '. . . because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'

There are three things mankind cannot do without, and these are bread, health and hope.

Other things may be dispensed with and life will still go on—although man will suffer and consequently curse his fate—but if he possess not these three things he will soon invoke death. For without them life becomes like unto death—death and suffering as well; death with its bitterness enhanced, without the peace that comes with insensibility. Hunger is the consuming away of the body; pain makes us hate the body; despair—the lack of all hope of improvement, of comfort or relief—renders all things distasteful and deprives us of all reason to be and all reason to act. There are those indeed who refrain from taking their own lives merely because to commit suicide would be to act.

In order to attract men to oneself, one must give them bread, health and hope. They must be fed, healed, and inspired with faith in a happier existence.

Jesus inspired this faith. To those who went into the

desert and climbed the mountain with Him, He gave bread both spiritual and material. He did not wish to turn stones into loaves, but with a few real loaves He fed thousands. And the stones men bore in their breasts He changed into loving hearts.

Never once has Jesus repulsed the sick. He is no self-tormentor, no flagellant. He does not hold that pain is necessary in order to overcome evil. Evil is evil and must be cast out, but pain is evil also. Spiritual suffering is sufficient for our full salvation [1]; why, then, should the body be made to suffer unnecessarily? The Jews of old regarded illness only as a punishment; Christians regard it above all else as a useful help towards conversion.

Jesus does not believe in vengeance to be wreaked upon the innocent, nor does He teach that self-torture, ulcers and the hair-shirt will ensure salvation. Let us give to the body what is of the body and to the spirit what is of the spirit. Jesus enjoys sitting at the hospitable board; He does not refuse a cup of old wine, He does not reprove the women who anoint His head and feet. Jesus can fast for many days; He is satisfied with a crust of bread and half a fried fish, and He can sleep upon the bare ground with a stone for His pillow. But not until the fatal hour brings it to Him does He court deprivations, hunger and suffering. To Him health is a good gift, and there are other acceptable gifts we may indulge in, provided no one suffers therefrom —the innocent enjoyment of a repast with friends, a glass of wine in pleasant company, the fragrance of a vase of nard.

When one who is sick appeals to Him, He heals him. Jesus did not come to deny life, but to confirm it—to confirm and restore a happier and more perfect existence. He does not seek out the sick especially. Rather is it His mission to banish spiritual pain, to bring spiritual joy. But if, on His way, He is able to banish bodily suffering also, to soothe pain, to restore the health of the body as well as that of the soul, He may not refuse to do so. If

[1] In Italian *salute* means both salvation and health.—Translator's Note.

He is frequently loath so to do it is because this is not His true mission ; His purpose is a higher one, and He would not that men regard Him as a mere vagrant charlatan, or as the worldly Messiah whose advent is expected by the majority. In the end, however, because He would conquer evil, and because there are those who know him capable of overcoming all evils, He allows His loving pity to induce Him to cast out the evils of the body also.

When along the roads that are made to be travelled by the strong, the lepers come towards Jesus in groups of ten or twelve—the repulsive, disfigured, horrible lepers—and He sees beneath their miserable rags those livid, scaly swellings, that cracked, bruised and mottled flesh, that stiff and wrinkled skin, the twisted mouths, streaming eyes and swelled hands ; when He looks upon these unhappy, suffering phantoms, whom all avoid, who are separated from all, who are disgusting to all, who may deem themselves fortunate if they have a crust and a cup of water, and some filthy hovel wherein to hide ; whose swelled and blistered lips can hardly enunciate the words they would fain utter ; these beings who beseech Him, whom they know to be strong in word and deed, Him, their last hope in their utter misery, to heal them, to make them clean, to perform a miracle, how can Jesus flee from them as others do, and turn a deaf ear to their pleadings ?

And the epileptics who writhe upon the ground with the froth upon their lips and their features contracted in a fixed spasm ; and the insane whom no man comforts, and who howl among the ruined tombs like hounds prowling by night ; and the paralytics, mere trunks that still possess sufficient sensibility to suffer, dead bodies inhabited by imprisoned, beseeching souls ; and the blind, the awe-inspiring blind, night-encompassed from the womb in anticipation of the darkness of the grave, stumbling along in the midst of them who are happy and may go where they list—the terrified blind who hold their heads erect, whose eyes are fixed as if searching for light in the far reaches of the infinite ; the blind to whom the world is but a sequence of hard things which they touch with their hands ; the

eternally solitary blind who know of the sun only by its warmth and its power to scorch.

How could Jesus say no unto these unhappy beings? His love, which is as infinitely greater than common pity as His nature is superior to human nature, could not possibly resist appeals that would touch the heart even of a pagan—appeals that move even when they are mute.

XXIX THE ANSWER TO JOHN

Jesus heals indeed, but He has nothing in common with the sorcerer or the exorcist. He does not resort to the tetragrammaton, the pentacle, to incantations, vapours, veils or mysteries of any sort. He does not summon to His aid either the powers from above or those from below. A word, a cry, a gentle voice, a caress are all He needs. His own will and His patient's faith are sufficient. He asks of all: 'Believe ye that I am able to do this?' And when He has healed them He admonishes them, saying, 'Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.'

To Jesus the miracle is but the confluence of two righteous wills, the live contact between the faith of him who acts and of him who is acted upon, the co-operation of two forces, the meeting and convergence of saving conditions.

'. . . Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. . . .' 'If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.' They who are without faith, who have less faith than the thousandth part of a grain of mustard, swear that such power is possessed by no one and that Jesus is an impostor.

In the Gospels miracles are designated by three terms: *Dunameis*=powers; *Terata*=wonders; *Semeia*=signs. They are signs to them who remember the Messianic prophecies, and wonders to them who witness them. To

Jesus, however, they are but *Dunameis*, mighty deeds, the victorious flashing forth of a superhuman power.

The cures effected by Jesus are of a double nature. They are not only of the body but also of the spirit. It is precisely those ills of the spirit that Jesus will heal in order that the Kingdom of Heaven may come upon the earth.

The majority of diseases are of a double nature and are singularly well adapted to metaphor. Jesus makes whole the diseased, the cripple, the fever-stricken, the man suffering from dropsy, a woman afflicted with a flow of blood, He even made whole Malchus the servant whose ear Peter had smitten with his sword in the Garden of Olives; but this was only in order that His command, return good for evil, might be obeyed until the end.

It is almost always the demoniac, the paralytics, the lepers, the blind men, the deaf and dumb who are healed by Jesus. Demoniac is the name whereby antiquity designated sufferers from mental diseases; even that enlightened teacher Aristotle believed in demoniac possession. It was held that the mentally deranged, lunatics, epileptics, and the hysterical were possessed by evil spirits. Modern explanations of these conditions, which are often contradictory and merely verbal, do not demolish the fact that in many cases the demoniac is such in the truest sense of the word.

This explanation for mental disorders, accepted both by the learned and by the common people, served Jesus admirably in the allegorical and allusive form of teaching He adopted. It was His mission to found the Kingdom of God and overthrow that of Satan. To cast out demons, therefore, was part of that mission. He was at no pains to distinguish between disorders due to sin and those due to possession by evil spirits. There exists a parallelism between bodily and spiritual ills which language itself has consecrated and which is based upon a true affinity. The madman and the epileptic, the slothful man and the paralytic, he who is impure and the leper, the blind man and he who cannot see truth, he who is deaf and he who

will not listen to truth, he who is saved and he who is resurrected.

When from his prison John sent two of his disciples to inquire of Jesus if He were indeed 'he that should come,' or whether another were to be looked for, the Lord replied: 'Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.' Jesus does not separate the Gospel from His miraculous healing. They are works of the same order; His answer means that He has healed the bodies in order that the souls may be the better disposed to receive the Gospel.

They who could not see the light of the sun now see that of truth; they who could not hear the voice of man now listen to the voice of God; they who were in Satan's clutches are set free; they who were diseased and covered with sores are as pure as little children; they who were impotent and could not move follow after Me; they who were dead to the life of the spirit have been resurrected by My word . . . and the poor, now that the Good Tidings have been preached to them, are richer than the richest. These things are My credentials, My letters patent.

Jesus the physician and liberator is not what His disingenuous modern enemies, in their efforts to revive easy paganism in opposition to asceticism, will have us believe Him to be. They tell us that He is the God of the diseased, the weak, the unclean, the miserable, the impotent, the slave. But Jesus' whole work is a gift of saving (*salute*), of strength, purity, riches and freedom. He comes to the sick to rid them of their illness, to the weak to strengthen them, to them who are unclean that they may be purified, to slaves that they may be set free. He does not love the diseased merely because they are such; like the ancients He loves health, and would fain restore it to all who have lost it.

Jesus is the prophet of happiness; He is our surety for life, for a life worthy to be lived; and His miracles are but the pledges of His promise.

XXX 'TALITHÀ QUMÌ'

'The dead are raised.' This is one of the signs that must suffice to the imprisoned Baptist. To the devoted sister, to Martha, the woman of action, Jesus said: 'I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' Resurrection is rebirth in faith; immortality is the permanent confirmation of this faith. The words of John the Evangelist form an abstract, somewhat theological, parable, which refers to a strictly individual experience.

The Evangelists knew of three resurrections, historical facts which they describe with all the sober but explicit precision of the eye-witness. Jesus raised three beings from the dead—a young man, a little maid, and His friend Lazarus.

He was about to enter Nain—lovely Nain, crouching on its hill-top a few miles from Nazareth—when He met with a funeral procession. A young man, the son of a widow, was being carried to his grave. A short time before the mother had lost her husband. This son was all she possessed, and now he also was about to be laid beneath the sod. In the midst of a group of women Jesus saw the weeping mother, half-dazed, uttering her heart-rending lament. In the whole world two men had loved her, and now both had gone from her. She stood alone—husbandless, childless, with no one to help, to protect, to comfort her, no one with whom she could share her woes and grief. The love of her youth was gone, gone also the love that had been the hope of her declining years. A husband may console a mother for the loss of her child; a child for the loss of her husband. Had but one of the two been spared! But alas, henceforth there will be no one to kiss her lips.

The sight of the sorrowing mother filled Jesus with pity. Her sobbing was as a reproach.

'Weep not,' He said to her.

Then 'He came and touched the bier' whereon the

young man lay stretched, wrapped in a sheet, but with his face bare, whereon there rested the pale composure of death. The bearers paused, and all were silent; even the weeping mother was still.

'Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!' Unto thee do I speak. This is no time for resting; thou sleepest peacefully while thy mother is in despair. Arise!

And the youth obeyed; he 'sat up and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother.' He *delivered* him to her because he was now hers alone. Jesus had taken him from the hand of death to restore him to one who could not live without him; in order that a mother should cease to mourn.

On another occasion the Lord was returning from the country of the Gadarenes, and a father fell down at His feet imploring His aid. His little daughter, the only one he had, 'lay a-dying.' The man's name was Jairus, and although he was a ruler of the synagogue, he had faith in Jesus.

Jesus and the father set forth together, but when they had gone half-way one of Jairus' servants came to meet them saying: 'Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.'

But Christ does not believe in death: 'Fear not,' He says to the father. 'Believe only and she shall be made whole.'

On reaching the house they found musicians and a crowd of people making a loud noise and wailing at the door. Within were the members of the household and some women. Jesus ordered them to depart, and comforted them, saying: 'She is not dead, but sleepeth.'

With the child's parents and three of His disciples He entered the room and, taking the dead child's little hand in His own, He cried in a loud voice:—

'*Talithà qumì!*' ('Maid, arise!').

And immediately she arose and walked about the room, for, Mark tells us, she was twelve years old. But, as she looked weak and pale after all these days of suffering, Jesus ordered them to give her food. This was neither

a spirit nor a spectre made visible, but a living body that, though still weary, had awakened from feverish dreams to another day.

Jesus loved Lazarus. More than once had He broken bread with Lazarus and his sisters in the house at Bethany.

Now one day Lazarus fell ill and word was sent to Jesus. But He answered, saying: 'This sickness is not unto death,' and tarried where He was two days longer. On the third day, however, He said to His disciples: 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth: but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.'

When He had nearly reached Bethany Martha came out to meet Him, and said reproachfully: 'Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died.'

Presently Mary joined them, and she also greeted the Master with the same words: 'Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died.'

Jesus was deeply moved by this reproach twice repeated; not that He feared to have arrived too late, but because any manifestation of want of faith in those who were dear to Him always caused Him pain.

'Where have they laid him?' He asked.

And they answered: 'Lord, come and see.'

Then Jesus wept, and, weeping, made His way to the tomb; and it was the first time they had seen Him weep.

Jesus commanded: 'Take away the stone.' But Martha the housekeeper, the woman of sense and judgment, objected, saying:—

'Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he has been dead four days.'

But Jesus did not heed her.

'Take away the stone,' He said. And they removed it, and Jesus turned His face heavenward and uttered a short prayer. Then He went to the opening of the tomb and called upon His friend in a loud voice, saying:—

'Lazarus, come forth!'

And Lazarus came forth, stumbling because he was

still bound with grave-clothes, and his face was covered with a napkin.

Then said Jesus unto them : ' Loose him and let him go.'

And all four, followed by the Twelve and the rest of the Jews, whose eyes were wide with amazement, returned to the house. Lazarus' eyes once more became accustomed to the light ; his feet, although still numb, once more supported him, and he clasped and unclasped his hands.

As well as he could, amidst so much confusion and after four days of mourning, the active Martha prepared the evening meal, and he who was risen from the dead sat at meat with his sisters and friends. But Mary could not eat for gazing at this conqueror of death who, having wiped the dust from His brow, was now breaking His bread and drinking His wine as had this day differed in no way from all others.

Such are the resurrections the Evangelists have recorded ; and their accounts inspire certain reflections that make all learned comment superfluous.

As far as we know Jesus raised but three persons from the dead, and if He acted thus it was not in order to display His powers and work upon popular imagination, but only because He was deeply affected by the sufferings of those who mourned—only to console a mother, a father, and two loving sisters. Two of these acts were performed in public : one only—the raising up of Jairus' daughter—took place in the presence of a few, and Jesus enjoined upon them that they ' tell no man what was done.'

But there is another point—the most important of all. In all three cases Jesus spoke of the dead as if they were not dead but simply sleeping. He had not time to speak of the widow's son, because His decision to act was too sudden, but to him also He said, as if addressing Himself to one indulging in an overlong sleep : ' Young man, I say unto thee, Arise ! '

When they told Him that Jairus' little daughter had passed away, He answered : ' She is not dead but sleepeth.' When they assured Him that Lazarus was dead, He insisted that His friend was not dead but merely sleeping.

Jesus did not pretend to bring to life but only to awaken. To Him death is but a form of sleep, a deeper sleep than that wherein we lose ourselves at nights ; a sleep so deep, indeed, that only a superhuman love can arouse us from it—love for the bereaved rather than for him who sleeps —the love of One who weeps at the sight of the tears of those whom He loves.

XXXI THE MARRIAGE IN CANA

Jesus liked to go to weddings.

To the man of the people who so seldom indulges in spending and merry-making and never drinks his fill, his wedding-day is the most memorable day of his life. It stands out as a moment of profusion, generosity and revelry, as a break in the long chain of grey monotony that is his life.

The rich who can feast at will, the modern man who consumes in one day what would have lasted a poor man of olden times for a week, no longer feels the solemn joy of that day. But the poor man of old, the labourer, the tiller of the soil, the Oriental who lived all the year round on barley bread, dried figs, a little fish, and a few eggs, who killed a lamb or a kid only on grand occasions, the man accustomed to privations and to weighing carefully, to do without many things, to content himself with the strictly necessary, regarded his wedding-day as the most festive and truly happy of his life. All other festivals, those of the Church or of the State, belonged to all, and were of yearly occurrence. But his marriage was his own festival, his alone, and came but once in the whole course of his life.

On this occasion all possible delights and costly things were assembled round the bride and groom, that they might never forget that day.

Torch-bearers went forth into the darkness, with musicians and dancers, to meet the bridegroom. In the house there was profusion of things. Divers meats prepared in various ways ; skins of wine propped against the walls ;

small jars of sweet-smelling ointment for the guests. Lights, music, perfumes, revelry and dancing; nothing was lacking for the pleasures of the senses. These things, the daily privilege of the rich, triumphed on that one day in the poor dwelling of the poor man.

Jesus was happy amidst all this innocent rejoicing. The delight of these simple people, freed for a few short hours from the melancholy barrenness of their everyday life, affected Him deeply. In the wedding He saw not only the festival, but in matrimony the supreme attempt of man's youth to vanquish destiny with love, with the union of two loves, with the agreement of two enamoured souls. It is the confirmation of a twofold faith in life, in life's continuity and desirability. The man who marries is a pledge in the hands of the community of men. By assuming his position as the head of a new branch of society, the father of a future generation, he acquires greater freedom while professing himself more enslaved.

Matrimony is at once a promise of happiness and the acceptance of martyrdom. Illusion and conscience both have their part therein. In the shadow of tragedy that throws a tremulous hope of joy upon the future, resides the sublime and heroic grandeur of marriage. One cannot refrain from entering into matrimony, yet were one to listen to the promptings of selfish reasoning, one would not marry. Has any other sort of fetter ever been so eagerly sought after as this?

To Jesus marriage has a still deeper meaning; it is the beginning of something that is eternal. What God has joined together man cannot divide. When two hearts have met and when two bodies have become one, there is no sword nor law that can separate them. In this life of man's—this ever-changing, uncertain, brief and failing life—there is but one thing that must endure for ever, even unto death and after, and that is marriage; the one eternal link in a perishable chain.

Jesus often recalls and alludes to marriage feasts and banquets. Among the most beautiful of all the parables are those of the king who sends out the invitations to the

marriage of his son; of the virgins who wait, in the darkness, for the bridegroom's coming; of the rich man who offers a banquet. To them who are scandalized because His disciples eat and drink, Jesus replies by comparing Himself to the bridegroom in the midst of his friends.

Unlike hypocritical abstainers He does not scorn good wine, and when, with His disciples, He shall drink the wine which is His blood, He will be thinking of the new wine of the Kingdom.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Jesus accepted the invitation to the marriage in Cana. All are familiar with the miracle He performed there. The water contained in six jars was turned into wine, into better wine than had been served before. The old rationalists declare that this was a gift kept hidden until that moment, a surprise arranged by Jesus at the end of the feast. Six hundred litres of good wine, they add, are a handsome present and proof of the Master's generosity.

These puny-souled followers of Voltaire, however, have failed to observe that John is the only one of the Evangelists who gives an account of the marriage at Cana—John the man of allegories and of philosophical symbols.

The miracle performed there was no trick—neither a trick to surprise nor one of prestidigitation—but a real transformation, achieved by the power the spirit possesses over matter, and it forms, at the same time, one of those parables that were not spoken but enacted by means of real facts.

To him who regards this anecdote not only in its literal sense, the water that becomes wine is but another of the figures representing the new epoch that begins with the teaching of the Gospel. In the desert, previous to the Announcement, water was all that was necessary. But now the Good Tidings have been proclaimed, the Kingdom is at hand, happiness is approaching. Out of tribulation mankind is about to pass into gladness; out of the widowhood of the old Law into a new marriage with the new Law. The Bridegroom is already amongst us. This is a time,

not for depression, but for enthusiasm ; not for fasting, but for rejoicing ; not for water, but for wine.

Do you remember the words the ' governor of the feast ' addressed to the bridegroom ? 'Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have drunk well, that which is worse ; but thou hast kept the good wine until now.'

Such was the custom in olden times, the custom prevailing among both Jews and pagans. But Jesus is determined to invert even this rule of hospitality. The ancients gave first the good and then the bad ; but He, after the good, would give the best. The sour, crude wine that is served at the beginning of the feast is an image of the old Law, poor wine, fermented and unfit to drink. The wine that Jesus brings us is strong and delicious, it awakens the spirit and warms the blood, it is the new Wine of the Kingdom, that which will be served at the wedding feast when heaven and earth shall be joined together ; the wine that procures that state of divine inebriation which in the age to come will be known as the ' madness of the Cross.'

The Marriage in Cana and the miracle performed there, which John gives as the first, represent allegorically the evangelical revelation.

Another parable expressed in the form of a miracle is that of the fig-tree that Jesus cursed.

One morning, when Easter was near at hand, Jesus, on His way from Bethany to Jerusalem, was hungry. Seeing a fig-tree by the roadside, He looked at it and found ' nothing thereon but leaves.' Although this tree was growing in a southern clime and was of a species whose fruit ripen early, the season was as yet not sufficiently advanced for the figs to have developed. But both Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus was wroth with the tree and cursed it, saying : ' Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.' And all at once the fig-tree withered away.

According to Mark the Lord's words were : ' No man eat of thee hereafter for ever.' And when, in the evening, they again passed that way, the tree was dead.

The Evangelists complete the story of the effect of the curse by a repetition of the precept Jesus so often uttered, namely that strong faith can give us all we ask for.

Others, however, see in this story the symbolical transposition of a complaint that is often on Jesus' lips. The fig-tree stands for Israel, the ancient Jewish religion, which now produces naught but leaves that are of no use, and afford no nourishment; leaves that symbolize the rites and ceremonies, that cast a blighting shadow, and are destined to wither without having benefited any one. Jesus, who is hungry for justice and for love, sought in vain among these leaves for the sustaining fruit of mercy and holiness. Israel failed to appease His hunger, to fulfil His hopes. Henceforward nothing is to be expected of this old trunk, covered with foliage indeed, but neverthe less barren. Let it wither away for all eternity, then! Other peoples will bring forth the good fruit.

The miracle of this tree that withered away is, at the bottom, but a very apparent gloss of the parable of the barren fig-tree as related by Luke: 'A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it. And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.'

The tree is not condemned after the first year, but after three years of barrenness; at the prayer of the dresser the sentence is suspended for another year, during which time the tree is to be carefully cultivated and tended. This shall be its last chance. If it fail the axe and the flames will do their work.

For three years Jesus had been preaching to the Jews and was now thinking of abandoning them, in order to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom to others. One of His labourers, however, a disciple who was still attached to his people, interceded on their behalf. Give them

another chance. Let us see if by the power of love this adulterous and wicked generation may not yet be converted. But when they are on the road that leads from Bethany to Jerusalem the trial has already been made. Nothing more is to be expected from Judaism but two beams in the shape of a Cross; the wicked fig-tree of Judaism deserves to be cast into the fire, and no one will ever again eat of its evil and late-ripening fruits.

XXXII BREAD AND FISHES

There are two versions of the multiplying of the loaves. These are alike in all respects save as regards the proportion of quantity to numbers—precisely, therefore, as regards the spiritual meaning that may be drawn from these accounts.

Thousands of poor people had followed Jesus into a desert place, far from any town. Three days had they gone without food, such was their hunger for the bread of truth contained in His word. But on the third day Jesus was moved to pity for them—there were women and children among them—and He commanded His disciples to feed them. The disciples, however, had but a few loaves and fishes, and there were thousands of mouths to be fed. Then Jesus ordered all to sit down upon the green grass, in circles of fifties and hundreds. When they were seated He blessed the small store, and it multiplied so that all ate their fill and there still remained many baskets full.

A comparison of the two versions reveals a singular fact. In the first instance the loaves were five and the hungry followers five thousand, and twelve baskets full were left over. In the second the loaves were seven—two more—the crowd numbered four thousand—one thousand less—and when all had eaten, only seven baskets full remained. With fewer loaves more people were fed and more was left over; when the loaves were in greater quantity there were fewer to feed, and less bread was left over. What, then, is the moral to be drawn from this inverse proportion? The less food we have the more we may distribute!

A smaller quantity gives more. Had the loaves been fewer still twice as many people might have been fed and more would have been left over. If, with five loaves, five thousand people were fed, with one loaf alone five times as many could have eaten. True bread, the bread of truth, is all the more sustaining the less there is of it. The old Law was abundant, copious, and divided into innumerable portions. But all its precepts, rules and formulæ are but dry leaves, useless shavings, poor scraps. No one can live on such food; the more there is of it the less it satisfies. The humble and the simple cannot appease their hunger for justice with it. On the other hand, a single word that comprehends all others, that transcends the stony religiosity even of such as are full and satiate, one single word that fills all spirits, comforts all hearts, and appeases all hunger for justice, and the multitude will be able to eat their fill and there will be plenty left over for those who were not present on that day.

Spiritual bread is in itself miraculous. A wheaten loaf is sufficient but for a few, and when it is finished there is nothing left for any one. But the bread of truth, the bread of joy, the mystic loaf is never consumed, can never be consumed. Divide it among thousands, among millions, and it will still remain intact. Each one will have had his share, as it was with the hungry multitude in the desert, and the greater the quantity distributed the more there will remain for future generations.

On another occasion when the disciples found themselves without bread, Jesus admonished them to 'beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.' The disciples, however, who were ever slow to grasp His meaning, 'reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.' But Jesus overheard them and reproved them, saying: 'O ye of little faith! Why reason ye among yourselves because ye have brought no bread? *Do ye not yet understand*, neither remember, the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets we took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should

beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?' That is to say, of the abolished law.

They are the Twelve, the chosen ones, yet they are slow to understand and are still wanting in faith.

Then, again, in the boat on the night of the storm, Jesus was obliged to reproach them. The Master 'was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow.' A sudden storm arose, a whirlwind swept the lake, and the waves beat upon the boat, putting it into great danger of capsizing. The terrified disciples awoke Jesus, crying: 'Master, carest thou not that we perish?'

'And he arose and rebuked the wind and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.'

Then Jesus, addressing His disciples, said: 'Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?'

And the danger past, they were ashamed of themselves and said one to another, 'What manner of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?'

This is One, O Simon Peter, who is without fear. Not only does His nature transcend human nature, but His faith is great, great also is His love, and great His purpose. Nothing, be it animate or inanimate, can withstand these three forms of greatness. He has renounced every temporal thing and has conquered time; He has renounced all the delights of the flesh and can therefore save all flesh; He has renounced all that is of matter, therefore He is Master of all that is material. Every one may have his share in this domination. Faith, provided it be not faith in oneself only, is sufficient.

Before Christ, only a few years before Christ, a great son of Italy, the hero of many wars, himself a corrupt but nevertheless a worthy man to rule the decadent republic, had sailed on a small galley in search of an army whose tardy arrival threatened to deprive him of victory, and the galley was rowed by a few men only. The wind rose, a tempest hurled itself against the galley, and the fearful pilot was considering returning to the port. But Cæsar, taking him by the hand, said to him: 'Keep to thy course,

Cæsar is beside thee, and his good fortune travels with the ship.'

These proudly confident words inspired the crew with courage, and each man, as if somewhat of Cæsar's strength had entered into him, fought against the waves with redoubled energy. But notwithstanding the efforts of the mariners the ship, on the point of sinking, was forced to turn back. Cæsar's faith was but pride and ambition, it was but faith in himself; the faith of Jesus was all love, love of the Father, love of mankind.

This faith enabled Him to go out to the boat wherein His disciples were labouring painfully against a contrary wind; it enabled Him to walk upon the waters as were He treading upon a green pasture. In the darkness they believed Him to be a spirit, and on this occasion again He was obliged to reassure them, saying: 'Be of good cheer; it is I. Be not afraid.' Hardly had He entered the bark when the wind dropped and they soon reached the shore. And again the disciples marvelled because, as the honest Mark tells us, '*they considered not the miracle of the loaves*; for their heart was hardened.'

The connection between these two incidents may appear ingenuous, but in reality it is enlightening; for the miracle of the loaves is the foundation upon which all others rest. Every parable, be it expressed in the language of poetry or by means of some visible marvel, is but a loaf kneaded into a different shape in order that His own followers—that they at least—might be made to understand the only truth that is of vital importance, that the spiritual is the only food worthy of man and that he who sustains life by means of this food becomes master of the world.

XXXIII HE IS NOT SECRETIVE, BUT A POET

At first sight Jesus may seem to be secretive and inclined to conceal His meaning.

He commands those He has healed to tell no man that He is the author of the miracle; He teaches that prayers are to be uttered and alms distributed in secret; when

His disciples recognize Him as the Messiah, He admonishes them that they keep that knowledge to themselves; after the Transfiguration He begs those who were present to keep silent in connection with what they have seen, and His teachings are almost always spoken in parables, the meaning of which not all are capable to understand.

Upon closer observation, however, the mystery ceases to be a mystery. Jesus is in no way esoteric. His doctrine is not to be communicated to a few hierarchs only. His work was done openly in the sight of all men. He always spoke either in the market-place, on the shores of the lake, in the synagogue or in the midst of a crowd.

If He forbade men to talk of His miracles it was with a view that He might not come to be numbered among witches or the workers of magic. He commanded that good works be done in secret in order that self-satisfaction might not destroy their merit. He desired that the Twelve should refrain from proclaiming Him the Christ before His entry into Jerusalem, which was to be the public inauguration of His Messiahship. He spoke in parables in order that He might be understood by the simple souls who are more fond of listening to a tale than to a sermon, and remember a story more readily than a piece of clever reasoning.

Three of the Evangelists chronicle words spoken by Jesus that could convey an opposite impression; but He spoke thus intentionally and that He might not be understood by all: 'Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. . . . Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing see not, and hearing hear not, neither do they understand.'

But Jesus' true meaning is this: 'You understand these mysteries, but the majority of men do not, although, like you, they have ears and a mind. That they may more readily understand I speak to them in parables, that is to say in language illustrated by facts, which make it the more comprehensible to them. Children are taught by means of moral fables; the simple by means of stories.

and these with whom I have to deal are as slow to understand as the most simple and as new to all teaching as little children. In order that their ears may hear I adapt my language to their capacity. They are all imagination, their intellect is but ill developed, and parables appeal to the imagination rather than to the power of reasoning. I do not use parables to conceal, but to reveal truth the better, even to such as would be unable to grasp it in a purely rational form. If, after all, they fail to understand, it is the fault alone of that stubbornness that so often closes the eyes and ears of the spirit.'

Jesus had no secret to hide. It was His intention that all, even the most humble and ignorant, should understand Him. The parables were not spoken to hide His teachings from the profane but to render them more explicit and comprehensible. That at times even the Twelve themselves failed to understand Him was a melancholy fact of which Jesus was fully aware.

The marvellously unique nature of His message has thrown into the shade its poetical originality, which is none the less marvellous. Jesus never wrote—save once with His finger on the ground, and the wind cancelled His writing for all eternity—but had He so desired He could certainly have been the greatest poet of all times, coming as He did of a people of fertile imagination, of the people who produced the Psalms, the Story of Ruth, the Book of Job, and the Canticles.

The fire of true poetry derives not from the flame of a candle but from the very light of the sun and stars, nor may it be kindled by the writings which earlier generations have bequeathed to us, but only by love, suffering, and the deepest emotions of the soul. The triumphant, almost childish simplicity of the spirit of Jesus, the pastoral surroundings of His youth, the perusal of a few books—works teeming with poetry—His loving communings with the life of the fields and of the animals, and, above all, His divine and passionate longing to bring light to him who suffers in the dark, to save him who is in danger of losing himself for all eternity, to bring supreme happiness to the

most unhappy, made of Jesus an inventor of living and enduring images wherewith He performed a miracle of a new nature, and one the Evangelists have failed to chronicle. It is the miracle of communicating the highest truth by means of stories that are so simple, so familiar, so full of grace, that even after twenty centuries they still shine with that unique freshness that is of things eternal.

Some of these stories are but idyllic or epic paraphrasings of revelations Jesus Himself has made before in abstract terms; but there are others that tell us of things He has never expressed in any other form. The parables are as an illustrative commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, a commentary such as only a poet could compose, and only that Poet to whom the word *Divine* may be more justly applied than to any other the world has known.

XXXIV THE LEAVEN

Women who live in cities do not make their own bread, but the old-fashioned country woman and the thrifty peasant wife know what leaven is. A lump of dough as large as a child's fist, kept over from the last baking, dissolved in hot water and mixed with the new dough will raise as much as three bushels of flour.

Of all the seeds mustard seed is one of the smallest; in fact it can hardly be seen. Yet, if sown in good soil, from this tiny seed a shrub will grow large enough to harbour birds in its branches.

The grain of corn is of a small size also. The peasant flings it upon the ground and then goes about his business. He sleeps, wakens, goes out and comes in. The days and the nights pass, and hardly does he give a thought to the seed. But lying there in the rich, damp soil, the grain of corn has sprouted; a blade of grass shoots up from it, bearing upon its summit an ear that at first is green and fragile but that will soon fill out and turn yellow; in due course the field is ready for the sickle, and the peasant can begin to reap.

It is the same with the Kingdom of Heaven and its

proclamation. At first the Word seems of no great importance. What is a word? A syllable, a sound, often uttered but finding seldom its way to our ears, and never to our heart, unless it comes from a heart. A word is a small thing, a breath, a faint sound that comes and goes and is borne away by the wind. The word of the Kingdom, however, is like Leaven: if it enter into good, pure flour, free from rust and vetch, it ferments and rises. It is like the seed that sprouts deep down beneath the surface of the soil, and is as patient as the earth that hides it; but when the spring comes it grows green and vigorous, and in the early summer it is ready for the harvest.

The evangelical message contains but a few words: 'The Kingdom is at hand; let your hearts be changed!' But if those few words enter into men who are well disposed, into simple souls who yearn to become great, into righteous men whose aim is to become truly holy, into sinners who seek in virtue that happiness they have sought in vain in evil, then do these words take root, then do they germinate in the depths, bringing forth abundant blossoms, developing gradually until full ears flourish gloriously throughout the summer that will never be followed by a deadening autumn.

Of those who surround Jesus there are but few indeed who truly believe in the Kingdom and make serious preparations for the great day. They are but a few inconspicuous mortals, scattered like crumbs of leaven among the different nations and the vast empires of the earth. But these few dozens of men of no importance, placed in the midst of a chosen people, will soon become thousands by the mere contagion of example, and in the course of three centuries one will reign in the place of Tiberius, who will kneel at the feet of the heir to the Apostles.

However, in order to participate in the enjoyment of the promised Kingdom we must relinquish all earthly possessions. Does not man do the same when material interests are at stake? If one who is labouring in the field of another, discover a treasure, he quickly covers it up again and hastens to sell all he possesses that he may

purchase that field. If a merchant who is seeking for gems of great beauty, gems worthy to be offered to kings, discover one larger and finer than any he has ever seen before, a pearl such as the greatest monarch does not possess, he will go at once and sell all he has, all his other less valuable gems, that he may buy the one extraordinary pearl.

If the labourer and the merchant (men interested in material things, who are satisfied with small gain) are willing to sell all they own in order to secure a treasure they deem more valuable than anything they have ever possessed—albeit it be but a perishable treasure—how much more willing to part with what they hold dear should those men be who are eager to purchase the Kingdom of God ? If the labourer and the merchant, for the sake of gold, of something that may be stolen and will certainly be consumed some day, if those are willing to make such temporary sacrifice that may perhaps profit them a hundredfold, shall not we be willing to sacrifice now what heretofore we may have esteemed of inestimable value, for the sake of an infinitely greater gain, for a gain of a vastly superior nature, for a treasure that will endure throughout all eternity ?

But before we perform acts of renunciation we must make sure that what remains left will be sufficient to carry us to the end of our undertaking. We must test our souls and measure our courage lest it be with us as it was with the man who built a tower that was to soar heavenwards like that of Jerusalem. The builder summoned labourers and masons and put them to work. But the tower had hardly risen above the level of the ground when the man found himself forced to stop all work for the lack of money. The tower remained in that unfinished state, standing as a dwarfed monument to the man's presumption, and his neighbours laughed him to scorn.

When a king proposes to wage war against another, the first thing he will do is to review his forces, and if his enemy's army numbers twenty thousand against his ten thousand, he puts aside all thought of war and hastens to make

overtures of peace before his enemy has time to attack him.

Let him not seek to follow Christ who is not sure of himself, who is not sure of holding on until the very end. For the founding of the Kingdom is a far more difficult matter than the building of a tower, and the creating of the new man involves a harder struggle than any earthly war, even though it be waged inwardly and in secret.

We cannot enter the Kingdom until we have been purified and are become worthy. The Kingdom is similar to a feast which lasts for ever, and one has to go to it dressed according to the festive occasion. The king who had prepared all for his son's marriage found that the guests he had bidden failed to appear; he then called in the common people, the wayfarers and beggars; but on entering the banqueting-hall he saw one who was unwashed and sullied with mud, and in his wrath he caused him to be cast out, leaving him to gnash his teeth in the icy darkness without. In the same way, if at the feast of the Kingdom the first bidden do not answer to the call, the sinners and those who are most miserable shall be admitted. The king had invited his chosen guests in good time, but one of them had just bought a farm, another five yoke of oxen, another was going to be married himself on that same day. All were busy with their own affairs and in no haste to accept the invitation. Some did not even trouble to send a message of excuse. Then the king sent his servants out into the highways with orders to gather the halt and the lame, the blind and the ragged, the filthy and the most degraded. And yet when all were assembled there was still room left for more. Therefore the king ordered his servants to force the passers-by to come into the hall, and when it was full the feast began.

It was a royal supper, a rich and splendid feast, but to the guests it was, after all, but an opportunity to overfeed themselves with meat and fish, to intoxicate themselves with wine and strong liquors. With the coming of dawn, when the revelry was over and the tables had been cleared, each one perforce returned to his own abode, to his own

misery. If some of those who had been bidden in the first instance had preferred another form of material pleasure to this one, they were certainly excusable!

But the invitation to the banquet of the Kingdom promises spiritual happiness, a happiness that is absolute, satisfying, enduring. It is something quite different from the passing diversions of this world; from drunkenness, from overeating, from revelry of the senses. And yet those whom Jesus singled out from amongst all men, and who were the first to be bidden to the divine feast of rebirth, have failed to answer His summons. They turn away their faces, shake their heads, avoid Him and go about their habitual business. They prefer the impurity of carnal delights to the splendours of that lofty hope whose realization is the only reasonable justification of our being.

Others, therefore, are called in their place; beggars instead of the rich, sinners instead of the Pharisees, harlots instead of women of high degree, the ignorant instead of the learned, the sick and suffering instead of the well and happy.

Even the last to come, if they but arrive in time, will be admitted to the feast. The 'lord of the vineyard' saw some labourers standing idle in the market-place and, having arranged to pay them a penny a day, sent them to work in his vineyard. Later in the day, at noontide, he saw others who were without work, and these also he sent into the vineyard. Later still others applied, and he hired them all and they all worked, some digging and some pruning. In the evening the master paid the labourers, giving the same amount to each. But the men who had worked since early morning protested, saying: 'Why do they who have worked a shorter time receive the same pay?' But the master rebuked them saying: 'Friends, did you not agree with me for a penny? Then why do you protest? Am I taking anything from you if I choose to give the same pay to the labourers who were hired at the eleventh hour?'

The apparent injustice of the master's attitude is but a more generous form of justice. He gives to all that which

he has promised them, and he who arrived last, but has worked in the hope of receiving the same reward, has as much right as have the others to enjoy that Kingdom for which he has laboured until evening. But woe unto him who shall delay too long! No man knows when the day will come, and he who has not entered in before the hour has struck will beat upon the door in vain, and be left to perish in outer darkness.

The Master is gone to the wedding and the servants know not when He will return. Blessed are they who shall have waited for His return and whom He shall find watching. The Master Himself will assemble them around the board and Himself minister unto them. But if He find them sleeping and there be no one to welcome Him; if He be kept waiting at the door, and they finally come to open to Him, drowsy, dishevelled, and but half dressed; if He do not find the lights burning and everything ready, He will take His slothful servants by the shoulder and cast them forth without mercy.

Let every man hold himself in readiness, for the Son of Man will come as a thief in the night, or like a bridegroom whose coming is delayed by some one he meets on the way, and no one shall know at what hour to expect Him. At the house of the bride there are assembled ten virgins who are waiting to go forth with their lamps to meet the bridegroom. Five of them—the wise virgins—have prepared oil for their lamps and remain awake listening for voices and the approaching footsteps. The other five—the foolish virgins—have not thought to bring a supply of oil, and, being tired with waiting, have fallen asleep. Suddenly the wedding party is heard approaching. The five wise virgins trim their lamps and joyfully hasten forth to meet the bridegroom. The other five—the foolish five—start up from their sleep and beg their companions to give them some oil for their lamps, but they answer, saying: 'Why did you not prepare some beforehand? Go now and buy of them who sell.' And the foolish virgins hurry from house to house to collect a little oil, but every one is asleep and no one answers their call and the shops are all shut

and the prowling dogs follow them, barking. At last they return to the bride's house, but they find the door closed. The five wise virgins are already within and are assembled round the bridegroom. The five foolish virgins beat wildly upon the door, cry aloud and beg to be admitted, but no man comes to open to them. Through the cracks in the door they can see the ruddy light of the banqueting-hall; they can hear the rattling of dishes and the tinkling of glasses; they can hear the music and the voices of young men singing, but they cannot get in. All through the dark night they remain there, and the noise of the wind makes them tremble, and they who can have no part in the revelry are filled with terror.

XXXV THE STRAIT GATE

'Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'

Those who shall seek to enter in at the end will be unable to do so, because when the Master of the house shall have locked the door, He will not open it again for any man. Until the coming of the Great Day, until it shall be too late, 'Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.'

Even the most obstinate, the slothful and the unmerciful are in the end moved by a persistent and oft-repeated appeal; and if man, who is but man, be not always insensible to pleading, how much more certain is it that a loving Father will answer our prayer!

A man once knocked at his friend's door at midnight, and, having roused him, cried to him through the door: '. . . Lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' But the other answered in a sleepy voice: 'Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.' The man without,

however, would not give over, and, knocking again, he raised his voice and with clasped hands entreated his friend to grant him this favour, declaring that he knew no one else in the neighbourhood, that the hour was late and his guest hungry. And such a noise did he make that at last his neighbour got up, let him in and gave him all he asked for.

The friend appealed to was lazy, but he had a kind heart; yet even the hard-hearted often act as that man did when a demand is insisted upon. In a certain city there was a judge who showed no kindness to any one, who was of a vindictive disposition and would have his way in all things. Day after day a poor widow came to appeal to him that justice might be done her, but although she had right on her side, the judge always roughly refused to satisfy her demands. The widow, however, bore his rebuffs with patience, and continued to importune him with her pleading, until finally, in order to rid himself of this woman who so persistently worried him, he pronounced sentence and sent her away satisfied.

However, we must not ask for more than our due. He who has done his work may eat and drink, but he will not have a special place allotted to him nor be better served than his brother, much less than his superior.

When the servant who has been out in the fields sowing and tending the cattle returns home, the master does not call him to sit at meat with him, but first has his own supper served and then gives the servant what is his due. This parable Jesus addressed especially to His Apostles, who were already beginning to dispute among themselves as to who would have the best place in the Kingdom. 'Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.'

To do is the only thing that is of real importance. There are some who pretend they will obey but do not do so. These shall more surely be condemned than those who at

first refuse to obey, but presently repent and do what has been commanded them. A father who had two sons, said to the elder : ' Go into the vineyard and work.' The young man consented, but instead of going into the vineyard, he lay down in the shade and went to sleep. The father said to his younger son : ' Go thou also into the vineyard and work with thy brother.' But the youth replied that he would rest that day because he was not feeling well. Presently, however, remembering his father's age and that he was not fit to bear fatigue, he overcame his weariness and went into the vineyard, where he laboured diligently until evening.

It is not sufficient to listen to the Word of the Kingdom. To consent only by word of mouth, and go on leading the old life, without even attempting to change one's heart, is less than nothing. ' Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock ; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell not : for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand ; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell : and great was the fall of it.'

The parable of the sower contains the same lesson. ' Behold, a sower went forth to sow ; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth ; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth : and when the sun was up, they were scorched ; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns : and the thorns sprung up and choked them. But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.' This parable the Twelve were unable to understand, and Jesus was obliged to explain it to them. The seed is the Word.

Satan comes and takes it away from him who has failed to understand it. He who understands it and receives it willingly, but does not allow it to take firm root in his heart, forgets all about it at the first breath of persecution. Then there are those who listen to the Word and accept it, but are unable to banish worldly preoccupations from their hearts, the thoughts of gain and of honours, and these thorns, in their rapid growth, end by suffocating it. But he who listens to the Word, comprehends it, makes it his rule of life and the sole master of his spirit, may well be likened unto the fertile soil wherein the seed increases an hundredfold.

Nor is it sufficient to listen to the Word, understand it, and obey its commands. He who has received it may not keep what he has received for himself alone.

What man is there who, having a lamp, puts it under the bed, covers it with a flower-pot, or hides it beneath a bushel? The lamp should be hung in the middle of the chamber that all may see it and receive its light.

A certain nobleman who was about to set out on a long journey, left ten talents with each one of his servants that they might trade with the money in his absence. On his return he summoned them to give an account of the trust. The first brought his master twenty talents, for with the first ten he had gained ten more. And the nobleman gave him authority over ten cities. The second brought fifteen talents, for he had not been able to gain more than five. But the third approached timidly and, showing his master the ten talents he had received, wrapped in a napkin, said: 'Lord, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin. . . . I feared thee because thou art an austere man; thou reapest that thou didst not sow.' And his master said to him: 'Thou wicked and slothful servant, out of thine own mouth will I judge thee. Take from him the talent and give it to him that hath twenty. . . . For I say unto you that unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

He who has received the Word must see to it that its benefits be redoubled. He has been entrusted with a treasure so precious that if he neglect it, it is but right that it be taken from him. He who adds nothing to his treasure shall lose what he already possesses, and he who has redoubled it shall receive still more. These are not paupers to whom something must be given because they are destitute, but unfaithful and slothful husbandmen, to whom has been entrusted the most fertile field of the whole universe.

Happy is the steward whom his master shall find intent upon checking the accounts of his subordinates and giving unto each his just part of corn; but if the steward begin to abuse the men-servants and the maids and think only of eating and of fuddling himself with wine, his master, returning when he is least expected, will have him beaten and condemn him to the fate of all who are unfaithful.

For the servant who is ignorant of his master's wishes, and, not knowing them, fails to put them into execution, will receive but a few stripes; but he who, knowing them, does not execute them shall receive many blows and be driven from the house where he once held sway. There is no excuse for those Bearers of the Word who are not the first to obey it. To whom much has been given, of him the most shall be demanded.

XXXVI THE PRODIGAL SON

A man had two sons. His wife was dead, but these two sons were left to him—two only. However, it is better to have two than only one, for if one be away, the other is at home; if one fall ill, the other will labour twice as much; should one die—for even one's children may die sometimes before their elders—should one die, there will be one left to look after his father.

This man loved his sons not only because they were flesh of his flesh, but also because he was of an affectionate nature. He loved both the elder and the younger, the younger perhaps more than the other, but so little more

was it that he himself was unconscious of any difference. All mothers and fathers have a special predilection for their last born ; to them he is always the smallest, the prettiest of all ; he is the one the law considers least ; he was the last baby, born but yesterday in the house, so that his childhood seemed to extend and stretch to the very threshold of young manhood, forming one long trail of tenderness. The image of the youngest of the house is still present in the eyes of all—when he was still at his mother's breast, and later on taking his first steps in his little, short skirt or clinging about his father's neck and riding upon his knee ?

But this man made no distinctions. His sons were as dear to him as his two eyes, his two hands, and he watched over their happiness and ministered to the needs of both with equal care.

The sons of the same father, however, may differ widely in character. It hardly ever happens, indeed, that two brothers are of the same disposition.

The elder of these youths was a sober, circumspect, steady fellow who in many ways appeared like a man matured by age, like a married man and the head of a family. He respected his father, but regarded him rather as a master than as a parent, and never displayed any affection or sentiment. He did his work punctually, but was sour and captious in his dealings with those who served under him ; he performed all prescribed acts of devotion, but the poor he would not tolerate near him. Although the house was well provided for with provisions of all kinds, he protested always that there was nothing for them. He pretended to love his brother, but in reality his heart was embittered with jealousy. When we talk about loving some one ' as a brother,' we say the contrary of what we really mean. It is rare, indeed, that two brothers really love each other. The history of the Jews, to take but that of one people, begins with the story of Cain, which is followed by that of Jacob who cheats Esau ; then come the stories of Joseph whom his brothers sell into slavery, of Absalom who slays Amnon, and of Solomon who causes

Adonijah to be strangled. It is the continuous spilling of blood upon a long road of jealousy, strife and betrayal. If, instead of brotherly love, we spoke of fatherly affection, we should avoid many mistakes.

The second son seemed to be issued from a different race. He was young, and not ashamed of his youthful passions. He revelled in his youth as in a pool of warm water. He possessed all the appetites, all the ardour, and all the graces (the disgraces as well) of his age. In certain moods he felt he could have killed his father, at other times he found himself exalting him to the skies ; he would be sullenly rebellious for weeks, and then suddenly fling himself upon his father's neck, rejoicing. He was more fond of merry-making with his companions than of working, and never refused an invitation to drink ; he was fond of women, vain, and always delighted to show himself a better man than his equals. But he was kind-hearted ; he paid others' debts, helped the poor, when unknown to his brother, he allowed no one to go from him uncomforted. He was seldom seen at the synagogue, and for this and other reasons the neighbours, righteous, God-fearing, respectable, irreproachable, pious folk, who were all greedy of gain, regarded him with disapproval and forbade their sons to associate with him. They declared, moreover, that this young man spent more than his father could afford (his father, they admitted, was a good man, but weak and blind), and also used language that was unseemly in the mouth of a well-brought-up youth. The boy himself hated the narrow life of that small place, and often said how much happier he would be could he but fare forth to the rich, thickly-populated countries, to those far-away countries beyond the mountains and beyond the seas, where there are great luxurious cities, with marble porticoes ; where there is wine from the islands, where the shops are full of silk and silver, and there are women arrayed like queens in rich apparel, women steeped in perfume, who yield themselves willingly for a piece of gold.

And here in his own country one had to behave decorously and attend to one's occupations, and there was no

way of indulging one's caprices and nomadic longings. His father, although he was wealthy and kind, doled out pence instead of talents; his brother scowled whenever he appeared in a new tunic, or when he came home even slightly intoxicated; in the family circle the field, the furrow, the pasturage and the cattle were the sole topics of conversation; in short the life at home was not life at all, but slow extinction.

One day, then (he had often contemplated the step, but had never before had the courage to take it), he hardened his heart, put on a bold face, and said to his father :—

'Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me . . . and I will trouble thee no more.'

The old man, deeply grieved by this request, made no answer, but withdrew to his room that no one might see his tears, and for some time the matter was not again alluded to. But the son was fretting; he was moody, he had lost all his youthful fire and gaiety, and the colour had fled from his face. His father observed all these signs and himself suffered the more acutely at the thought of an approaching separation. Finally paternal affection triumphed over selfish love. The father's substance was appraised; each son took what was his by law, and the old man kept the rest for himself. The Prodigal lost no time. Everything he could not carry with him he sold, realizing a goodly sum; and one night, without saying farewell to any one, he mounted a fine horse and rode away. The elder brother was by no means displeased to see him depart. 'He will never have the courage to return,' thought he, 'so that henceforth I shall be as an only son, the head of everything, and, in the end, the rest of the property will be mine.'

But the father wept in secret. His wrinkled eyelids shed all their tears; the furrows on his old cheeks, the whole of his face, was wet with tears. From that day forth he was a changed man, and only the love he bore the son who was left to him enabled him to survive the sorrow of that separation.

There was an inner voice, however, that spoke to him

and told him that perhaps his child, his second born, was not lost to him for all time; that he might perhaps experience the joy of holding him again in his arms on this side of the grave; and this hope helped him to bear his suffering with greater fortitude.

Meanwhile the fugitive was travelling speedily towards that land of riches and gaiety which he intended to make his home, and at each turning of the road he took pleasure in feeling the money-bags that hung on either side of his saddle. Soon did he reach the land of his wishes and then began to lead a life of pleasure. He believed the thousands he had brought with him would never come to an end. He hired a fine house, purchased five or six slaves, dressed like a prince, surrounded himself with friends of both sexes, who sat at his table and drank his wines until they could drink no more. He was lavish with women and chose the most lovely of all—those who danced and played best, who dressed most gorgeously and knew how to display their charms most cunningly. This provincial lordling, avid of splendour, who heretofore had led the austere life of remote country regions, who had been kept on a strict diet at an age when the appetites are strongest, now gave a free rein to his passion for revelry and luxury, amidst surroundings that were as dangerous as a bridge without parapets.

Such a career as the Prodigal was pursuing was bound to come soon to an end, however. 'Take away and add nothing to, and the heap will soon dwindle,' the peasants say when they go to the pile of corn to fill a sack for the miller. Like all sacks the Prodigal's had a bottom, and the day came when it no longer contained either gold, silver or even bronze, when it fell flabby, an empty piece of canvas and leather, upon the ground. Friends and women at once disappeared; slaves, couches, tables all were sold, and the sum realized kept want at bay for a time. But to add to the Prodigal's misfortunes 'there arose a mighty famine in that land,' and the young man soon found himself among a multitude of starving beings. No one took any notice of him; the women had gone

away to other cities where conditions were less disastrous ; the companions of his nightly revels could hardly provide for themselves.

As destitute as it was possible to be, the unhappy youth departed one day from the city and, beyond the gates, fell in with a man who was on his way to a fine estate of which he was the fortunate owner. So earnestly did the Prodigal entreat him to have compassion on him, that he engaged him as his swineherd, for the youth was young, strong, and swineherds were hard to get, and no one who could help it would accept such a position. There could be no greater degradation for a Jew. Even in Egypt, where animals were worshipped, only swineherds were forbidden to enter the temples. No father would give his daughter in marriage to one of them, nor would any man marry a swineherd's daughter.

The Prodigal, however, had no choice, and found himself reduced to driving a pack of hogs to their grazing-places. He had no wages and the food was scanty, for there was but little for any one. But the swine did not suffer, for they will eat anything ; moreover the country was rich in carob-trees, whose fruit they could devour. The starving youth, gazing with envy upon the black, the red-brown swine as they rooted in the ground and greedily crunched pods and roots, longed to be able to satisfy his hunger with these things, and the recollection of the feasts he had sat at in the great city, the remembrance of the abundance in his father's well-regulated house, made him weep bitter tears. At times, when hunger gnawed hard at his vitals, the struggle for life made him snatch the dark fruit of the carob-tree from the grunting snouts, and temper the bitterness of his repentance with the sickly, woody sweetness of the pod. Had his master found him doing this it would have gone hard with him.

His clothes ! They consisted of a filthy tunic such as slaves wear ; of a pair of dilapidated sandals held in place by lacings made of twisted grasses ; a faded rag protected his head from the sun. He had once had a handsome and prepossessing countenance, and the sun of his native hill-

sides had bronzed his skin, but now a deathlike hue had gradually covered his features, that had lengthened and become pinched, and assumed a leaden, muddy hue.

He wondered who was now wearing his spotless garments made of the softest wool, spun and woven at his father's home, those garments he had left in the great chest for his brother's use ? Where now were those fine tunics of crimson silk that he had been forced to sell for a mere song ? His father's servants were better clad than he, and had more to eat.

Coming to his senses at last, he cried :—

' How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger ! '

Heretofore, whenever the thought of returning home had occurred to him he had put it from his mind. To return in such a pitiful state after he had scorned his home, caused his father so much suffering, and allowed his brother to triumph over him ! To go back naked, unshod, and without a single drachma, without the ring—the sign of freedom—disfigured and ugly to look at after this severe time of hunger, of slavery ; carrying with him nothing but the recollections of his abominable life ; to acknowledge that all those pious neighbours and his own brother had been right after all ; to humiliate himself at the feet of the old man he had left without a single parting word ! To return a loathsome outcast to the place whence he had set out as a prince ! to return to the surroundings he had scorned, to a house that contained nothing he could call his own !

Ah, no ! it still contained something that was his own —his father. If he belonged to his father, it followed that his father belonged to him also. He had begotten this son, who was bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. Although he had sinned against him, his father could not cast out his own flesh and blood. Should he refuse to welcome him as his son, at least he would keep him as his servant, instead of a stranger, of one born of another. ' I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and

am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.' I do not return as a son but as a servant, a labourer; I do not ask thee for thy love, for to that I have no claim, but only for a crust in thy kitchen.

Then the young man drove the swine back to the master and set out on the journey towards his native country. His bread he begged from the peasants, who never refused him, and ate it, wet with his salt tears, in the shade of the sycamore trees. He could hardly stand on his feet, that were sore and bruised, for by now he was barefoot, but his faith in his father's forgiveness led him, step by step, in the direction of his home.

At last, one day at noon, he arrived in sight of his father's house, but he lacked the courage either to draw near and knock, to call out or to cross the threshold, and could but loiter near, waiting for some one to come out. And presently his father himself came to the door and saw him from afar off, and recognized him in spite of his altered appearance, for a father's eyes, even though their sight be dimmed by many tears, cannot mistake his son. And he ran towards him and clasped him to his breast, and kissed him again and again, and was never tired of pressing his pale old lips to those shrunken cheeks, to those eyes that were still beautiful although their expression had changed, to those dusty locks that still waved softly, to that flesh that was his own.

The son, confused and shaking with emotion, knew not how to respond to these caresses, but as soon as his father had released him, he flung himself upon his knees, and, trembling, repeated the words he had intended to address to the old man:—

'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am not worthy to be called thy son.'

At that moment, wherein the youth humiliated himself to the point of renouncing his sonship, the old man felt his fatherhood more strongly than ever before; felt that another son was born unto him. Without a reply he summoned his servants in the strong firm voice of former

days, although his eyes were still dim and brimming over with tears.

'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet,' he ordered.

The master's son must not enter his own house like a beggar, but arrayed in the best robe, with new sandals on his feet and a ring upon his finger. And the servants will wait upon him, for he is one of the masters.

'And bring hither the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead and is alive again: he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.'

The fatted calf was reserved for festive occasions. 'But what occasion can be more festive for me?' the father thought. 'What time can be more joyful? I had mourned for my son as for one dead, and here he is alive and standing at my side. He was lost to me in the world's wicked mazes, and lo, the world has restored him to me. He was far away, but now he stands in our midst; he was a beggar at the door of strangers, but now he is master in his own house; he was famishing, but now he shall feast at his own board.'

The servants hastened to execute the master's orders. The calf was killed, skinned, quartered, and soon roasted. The oldest wine was brought up from the cellar and the best room made ready for the banquet. A servant was despatched to bid the father's friends to the feast, and another went to summon the musicians, that they come without delay with their instruments.

When everything was ready, and the son had bathed, and his father had embraced him over and over again—as would he satisfy himself by the evidence of his own lips that his son was indeed with him in the flesh and was not a dream, a vision—they sat down to the feast, and wine was poured into their glasses, and the musicians began to play and the singers raised their voices in songs of praise.

Now the elder brother had been all day long in the fields, but when evening was come he started homewards.

On nearing the house he heard much noise, music, clapping of hands, and the tread of dancing feet. 'What can have happened?' he asked himself. 'Has my father gone suddenly mad, or has a wedding procession stopped unexpectedly at our house?'

He disliked noise and new faces, and so would not enter and see for himself what was taking place, but called to a lad whom he saw leaving the house, and asked him for an explanation of all this uproar.

And the lad said to him: 'Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.'

At these words the elder's heart gave a great leap and the colour fled from his face, not, however, on account of his being glad, but because he suddenly felt himself filled with envy and jealousy. The hatred of times past once more burned hotly within him, and he felt that he had a just cause for resentment. He would not enter the house, and remained without, nursing his wrath.

Presently his aged father came forth and called to him, saying: 'Come into the house, for thy brother is returned and has asked for thee and will be rejoiced to see thee; and we will all feast together.'

But the dutiful son could no longer control himself, and for the first time in his life rebuked his father to his face, saying:—

'Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandments: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.'

These few words suffice to reveal the meanness of the young man's spirit, a meanness that had hitherto been concealed beneath the mantle of hypocritical righteousness. He reminds his father of his own obedience, accuses him of avarice ('. . . thou never gavest me a kid') and reproaches him, he, the son who had no love for his father, with being an all too affectionate parent. 'This thy son,'

he says, not 'this my brother.' The father may recognize the Prodigal as his son if he will, but he will not recognize him as his brother. 'He "hath devoured thy living with harlots." He hath consumed money that was not his own with women who did not belong to him, whereas I have remained with thee, have sweated without recompense in thy fields.'

But the old man is ready to forgive this son as he has forgiven the other.

'And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.'

The father is sure that these words will suffice to silence his first-born. 'He was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found.' Is there any other reason necessary, and what other reason could be stronger than this? 'No matter what he may have done; he may have wasted my substance with bad women and squandered it even to the last penny; he may have left me without a word—left me to mourn—but had he sinned even more deeply, yet would he be my own son. Had he been a highway robber and murderer of innocents, had he offended me even more grievously, still I could never forget that he is my son and bone of my bone. He went away but is returned again; he disappeared and has appeared again; he was lost and is found; he was dead and he is alive again. I ask for nothing more. And in thanksgiving for this miracle the sacrifice of a fatted calf seems to me but a small thing indeed. Thou hast never left me; I have enjoyed thy company always; all of my kids were thine, hadst thou but asked for them; thou hast eaten every day at my table. But thy brother has been far away for many days, many weeks and months. I saw him no more save in my dreams; for a long time he has not broken bread with me. Am I not justified, then, in rejoicing at least for one day?'

Jesus cut His story short at this point. It was not necessary to finish it. The meaning of the parable is clear enough, and no story that has ever been told by

mouth of man (save that of Joseph) can equal this one for beauty, nor has any other taken such firm hold upon the hearts of men.

The exegetist is free to puzzle his brains and explain the meaning of this parable in the manner most satisfactory to himself. He may declare that the prodigal son is the new man purified by suffering, and that the dutiful son is the Pharisee, who rigidly observes the letter of the old law but knows not love. Or he may tell us that the dutiful son stands for Israel, who fails to comprehend the love of the Father, and will welcome even the pagan who has wallowed in obscene contact with the Gentiles and with swine.

Jesus was not one to propound enigmas. At the end of the parable He Himself tells us that '. . . joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over' all the self-righteous who glory in their righteousness, all the pure who glory in their outward purity, all zealots who hide the barrenness of their hearts beneath an ostentatious observance of the law.

We have always been sure that the truly righteous will be received into the Kingdom. They have never given us cause to tremble for them, they have never made us suffer, and there is therefore no call for especial rejoicing over them. But for him who has been on the verge of perdition, who has suffered so fiercely in order that his spirit might be reborn, that he might overcome in himself the instincts of animalism, who has a stronger claim to his place because he has had to renounce his whole past in order to obtain it—for him, indeed, the voices of the angels will be raised in songs of praise.

'What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety-and-nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. . . . Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one

piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it ? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me ; for I have found the piece which I had lost.'

And what is a sheep in comparison with a son who is raised from the dead, whose soul is saved ? And of what value is a piece of silver in comparison with one who had gone astray, but finds salvation at last ?

XXXVII THE PARABLES OF SIN

Pardon creates an obligation which admits of no exceptions. It is transmissible and must be transmitted. Love is a fire that goes out unless we communicate it to others. If your heart has been set aflame with joy, you must communicate your flame to all who come near to you ; if you do not, you yourself will become as a stone, blackened by smoke, but cold.

One day a certain king 'would take account of his servants,' and, one after another, summoned them to his presence. Among the first to come was a servant who owed him ten thousand talents, and as he could not pay, the king commanded that he, his wife, his children, and all that they possessed be sold, that the debt might be paid, at least in part. In despair the man cast himself at his master's feet. He seemed but a heap of clothes out of which came sobs and protestations : 'Have patience with me,' he cried. 'Wait but a little longer and I will pay thee all. But do not allow my wife and children to be sent to the market-place like sheep, that they be separated from me and sent no man knows whither ! '

The king's heart was touched, for he also was the father of children of tender age, and he set the servant free and forgave him the heavy debt.

The debtor went forth, in appearance another man, but his heart was unchanged by the great consideration with which he had been treated. Presently he met one of his fellow-servants who owed him one hundred pence

—a small sum indeed in comparison with his own debt—but he flew at him and seized him by the throat, shouting: 'Pay me what thou owest me without delay, or I will have thee bound and cast into prison.' The unhappy man who was [illegible] set upon did what his persecutor himself had so recently done in the presence of the king; falling upon his knees, he protested, [illegible] and swore to pay in a few days' time, kissed the hem of the other's garment, reminded him of their friendship of long standing, and [illegible] of the little children who were waiting for him at home, implored his creditor to have patience a little longer.

But his rascally tormentor, who was but a servant and not a king, had no mercy. Taking him by the arm, he led him before the judge and had him sent to prison. The news spread soon among the other servants in the palace, and all were deeply grieved. When the story reached the king's ears he immediately sent for the hard-hearted creditor and 'delivered him to the tormentors,' saying, 'I forgave thee all that debt. . . . Shouldst thou not have had compassion on thy fellow-servant even as I had pity on thee?'

Sinners who acknowledge the evil that is within them and abjure it with a contrite heart are nearer the Kingdom than those sanctimonious individuals who glory in their own piety.

'Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee and the other a publican.' The Pharisee wore his phylacteries upon his forehead and upon his left arm; his garment was trimmed with shimmering fringes, and he held himself very straight as he prayed thus: 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.'

The publican, on the other hand, did not even dare to raise his eyes to heaven, and seemed ashamed to appear before the Lord. He sighed and smote his breast and spoke no other words than these: 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

Once 'a certain lawyer stood up' and said to Jesus: 'Who is my neighbour?' And Jesus spoke this parable

in reply. A man who was a Jew started to go down from Jerusalem to Jericho through the mountain passes. He was attacked by brigands, who stripped and wounded him and left him lying half dead by the roadside. Presently a priest passed that way, one of those who occupy a prominent place at all feasts and assemblies, and boast of their accurate knowledge of the will of God. In order, however, to avoid contact with anything unclean, he was careful to pass on the other side of the way. Soon afterwards a Levite came by. This man also was among the most zealous and highly esteemed, and he knew every most insignificant detail of the sacred ceremonial, and although he was but a sacristan, he felt more like one of the chief priests of the Temple. He glanced at the bleeding body and walked on rapidly, without stopping. At last a Samaritan passed that way. Now to the Jews the Samaritans were infidels, traitors, and but a shade less odious than the Gentiles themselves, and this merely because they would not offer sacrifices at Jerusalem and accept the reform introduced by Nehemiah. This Samaritan, however, did not stop to inquire whether the wretched creature lying bleeding amongst the stones be or be not circumcised, whether he be a Jew or a Samaritan. Hastening to his side and examining his wounds, he was moved to pity, and, taking a couple of flasks from his saddle-bag, poured a little oil and a little wine upon them and bound them up with a kerchief; then placing the stranger across his own saddle, he took him to an inn. Here he had him put to bed and sought to restore him to consciousness by pouring something hot between his lips, nor did he give over until the man was better and could speak and eat. On the morrow the Samaritan took the innkeeper aside and, giving him two pence, said: 'Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendeth more, when I come again, I will repay thee.'

Our neighbour, then, is he who suffers, who stands in need of our ministration, no matter who he be. Even our enemy, if he need our help, though he ask it not, is the nearest of our neighbours.

Charity constitutes the best of all titles to our admission into the Kingdom. The rich glutton who feasted daily with his friends and was 'clothed in purple and fine linen,' was made aware of this fact. At the door of his palace stood Lazarus, who was poor and hungry and covered with sores, who would have been grateful for the fragments and bones that fell from the glutton's table. The very dogs pitied Lazarus in his misery, and, being unable to do anything else for him, they came and licked his sores, while he caressed the gentle, affectionate animals with his fleshless hand. But the rich man felt no pity, and it never entered his head to summon him to his table, nor did he ever send him a morsel of bread or the scraps that would be thrown away, because even the scullions would not eat them. Now it came to pass that both the beggar and the rich man died, and the beggar was made welcome at Abraham's table while Dives was cast down into the flames of hell. Here he was tormented by a terrible thirst, and there was no one to comfort him. Afar off he saw Lazarus feasting with the Patriarchs, and out of the midst of the flames he cried: 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'

While both were alive Dives had never given Lazarus so much as a crumb, and now he did not ask to be delivered from the fire, nor even for a cup of water, even for a sip, a drop of water, but only for what little moisture might cling to the beggar's finger-tip, to the very tip of his little finger. '"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. But now he is comforted and thou art tormented." Hadst thou but given the smallest part of thy supper (and thou wast aware that he was hungry and lay at thy door more miserable than any dog, and that the very dogs were more compassionate than thyself), hadst thou but given him a single mouthful of bread, I say thou wouldst now have no need to ask for a drop of water from his finger-tip.'

The rich man delights in his wealth and is loath to give away even the smallest part of it, for he is under the delusion that this life will never end and that the future will be as the past has been. But death comes even to the rich man, comes when he is least expecting it.

There was once a rich countryman whose ground brought forth more plentifully than usual in a certain year; and he went about calculating how rich he was going to be. ' " And he said, This will I do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods," the corn, the barley and the oats; and I will build other sheds for the hay and straw, and stables for the cattle that I shall buy; and one stable large enough to hold all the sheep and goats. " And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," and worry not about anything else.'

Never for a moment did it occur to him that of all the earth had yielded he should set apart a portion for his poor neighbours. But in that same night, after all his planning and arranging, the rich countryman died, and on the morrow they buried him in the earth, naked and alone, and there was no one to pray for him.

He who fails to make the poor his friends, he who does not use his wealth to lighten the burden of their misery, may not expect to gain admittance to the Kingdom. Sometimes the ' children of this world ' know better how to arrange their earthly affairs than do the ' children of light ' those affairs that are celestial.

So was it with that steward who had cheated his master and knew he must resign his post. But before doing so he called together all of his master's debtors and cancelled part of what each one owed, so that when he was finally dismissed he had made so many friends by means of this dishonest stratagem that they saw to it he did not want for anything. By his cheating and stealing he had helped himself and others also. He was a thief indeed, but a judicious thief. If men would but use the same stratagem for the saving of their souls that this individual used for

the saving of his body, how much more numerous the converts to the faith of the Kingdom would be !

He who is not converted in time will be cut down like the barren fig-tree. But conversion must be perfect, because backslidings lengthen the distance that separates us from the Kingdom far more than repentance has shortened it.

A certain man once succeeded in ridding himself of an evil spirit that had possessed him. The demon went forth and wandered in ' dry places seeking rest, but finding it not.' Therefore he determined to return whence he was come out. He found, however, that the house he had left (the man's soul) was empty, and had been swept and garnished so that he almost failed to recognize it. Hereupon he summoned to his aid seven other spirits ' more wicked than himself,' and with them finally succeeded in entering the house and dwelling therein, and thus ' the last state of that man was worse than the first.'

On the day of triumph regrets and recriminations will count for less than the whispering of the wind in the rushes. Then the last, irrevocable choice will be made. Like the fisherman who, having hauled in his net full of fishes, sits down upon the shore and puts those that are good for food into baskets and throws away the bad ones. A long truce is granted to sinners, that they may have time to change. But when the fatal day shall dawn he who has not reached the gates, or is not worthy to enter in, will be shut out for all eternity.

A thrifty husbandman had sowed good seed in his field, but at night an enemy came and sowed tares in great plenty in the same field. Soon the green began to show, and the labourers recognized the tares and hastened to tell the master, saying :—

' Wilt thou that we go and gather them up ? '

But the thrifty peasant answered :—

' Nay ; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest : and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them ; but gather the wheat into my barn.'

Like the honest husbandman, Jesus also waits for the time of the harvest. One day a great multitude had assembled around Him to listen to His word, and at the sight of so many men and women who thirsted for justice and hungered for love, He was moved to compassion, and said to His Disciples :—

'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.'

His voice could not be heard everywhere ; the Twelve were not enough ; there must be other heralds, that the Good Tidings may be carried to all who suffer, to all who are still waiting for them.

XXXVIII THE TWELVE

Not knowing in what other way to make the great pay for their greatness, fate punishes them with disciples.

No disciple, precisely because he is such, succeeds in grasping, at the best, more than half of the significance of his master's teachings, which he interprets in his own way, and according to his own intellectual capacity. He therefore—though unintentionally perhaps—defeats his master's aims, and distorts, vulgarizes, minimizes and corrupts his teachings.

The disciple is rarely without companions, and, not being alone, is jealous of the others ; for at least he aims at being first among those who are second ; and he therefore slanders and seeks to entrap his fellow-disciples. Each one believes himself to be, or would have others believe him to be, the master's only perfect interpreter.

The disciple knows he is but a disciple, and at times he feels ashamed to find himself eating at another's table. When this is the case he twists and alters the master's original ideas that they may appear to be his own ; or else he teaches the contrary of what he himself has actually been taught, and this is the most grotesque and servile attitude a disciple can assume.

In every disciple, even in those who appear most loyal and docile, there is the seed of a Judas.

A disciple is a parasite, he is the passive agent who steals from him who sells and cheats him who purchases; a hanger-on, who, being invited to dinner, picks at the *hors d'œuvre*, tries all the sauces and sweeps the fruit dish clean, but does not attack the bones because he has no teeth (or only milk-teeth) wherewith to crack them and get at the marrow. The disciple paraphrases precepts, renders the mysterious more mysterious still, complicates what is simple, multiplies difficulties, comments upon every syllable, misrepresents principles, clouds evidence, enlarges upon detail, weakens the essential, dilutes the strong wine and then seeks to make his own outpourings pass as the quintessence, the double-distilled elixir. Instead of a flaming and light-shedding torch he is but a smoking tallow candle, that fails to illumine even itself.

Yet no genius, no matter how much he may have wished to do so, has ever been able to dispense with these followers, because the genius, who lives apart from the multitude, who is so far removed, so solitary, needs some human presence near him; he cannot do without the illusion that there is some one who understands his word, who has assimilated his ideas and will transmit them to others, to others who are far away, both before and after his death. This nomad, who has no home of his own, longs to sit beside the hearth of a friend. This being, who strikes no roots, who can have no family of his own, is devoted to the children of his spirit. This captain whose true soldiers will not be born unless he impregnates the soil with his own blood, longs to see an army, be it ever so small, surrounding him.

One of the tragic elements inherent to all greatness is that, although disciples may be undesired and even dangerous, no one can do without them, even though they be false disciples. Prophets suffer if they are left without proselytes, and suffer still more, perhaps, when they have acquired them.

For a thought, more even than a child, is attached by

a thousand threads to a man's innermost soul. It is so precious, so delicate, so fragile a thing that it is all the more incommunicable in itself the newer it is! The entrusting of it to another, the engrafting of it upon the thought of another, which thought is necessarily of a lower order, the confiding of this rare treasure—a great, new thought—to the keeping of men who will not know how to cherish it, is a tremendous responsibility, a source of never-ending torment, of acute pain.

But the genius longs to distribute among all men what he himself has received, and this is a task too heavy to be accomplished alone; moreover, even the most lofty form of pride is not free from vanity, and vanity must have adulation and praise, even though it be of a fulsome nature, it needs commendation even if only by word of mouth, consecration even if only at the hands of the vulgar; it needs its victories even if they be but in appearance.

Christ is exempt from all weaknesses, but, having undertaken to bear all the burdens of humanity, He did not shrink from the burden of a troop of disciples. Before suffering at the hands of His enemies, His own friends persecuted Him.

The priests put Him to death but once; His disciples caused Him daily suffering. Despite the persecutions inflicted upon Him by the Sadducees, the Romans, the soldiers, and the multitude, the cruelty of His Passion would not have been complete had He not been forsaken by the Apostles.

He knew well who they were. A Galilean Himself, Jesus chose them among the Galileans; poor Himself, He chose them among the poor; simple Himself, with a divine simplicity that transcends all philosophies, He chose His Apostles among the simple, whose simplicity, however, was earth-bound. He would not choose them among the rich, because these He was come to combat; nor among the Scribes and doctors, for He was come to overthrow their law; nor among the philosophers, because there were none in Palestine, and had there been any they

would have sought to extinguish His mystical and supernatural light beneath the bushel of dialectics.

He knew that, in the end, He would be able to work His will with these rough but inviolate souls, who were ignorant but enthusiastic; He knew that He would be able to raise them up to Himself, to mould them as clay from the river-bed is moulded, which, though it may be but mud, can assume a shape of eternal beauty. But in order to work this transformation Jesus needed the flame descending from the Third Person. Too often, until the Pentecost, were they subject to the daily fall of an imperfect nature.

Much must be forgiven the Twelve because, save for incidental brief moments, they had faith in Him; because they strove to love Him as He desired to be loved; and above all, because, although they failed Him in the Garden at Gethsemane, they never forgot Him, and perpetuated the memory of His word and of His life for all eternity.

But if we were to consider more closely those disciples of whom the Gospels give us some knowledge, we cannot refrain from feeling sadly disappointed. Those fortunate men to whom was granted the supreme grace of living in close contact with Christ, at His very side, walking, eating, sleeping with Him, who could see Him face to face, touch His hand, and embrace Him, receiving His teachings from His own lips—those twelve most fortunate mortals, whom millions have secretly envied throughout the centuries, did not always prove themselves worthy of the supreme happiness they alone possessed.

We see them, hard at heart, hard of understanding, slow to grasp the meaning of the Master's simplest parables; not always capable, even after His death, of understanding who Jesus really was, and the nature of the Kingdom He foretold; often wanting in faith, in love, in brotherly charity; eager to receive their promised reward; jealous of one another; impatient for the coming of that day of triumph which would compensate them for their long waiting; intolerant with those who were not on their side; vindictive against those who refused them hos-

pitality ; slothful, doubting, worldly-minded, avaricious, cowardly.

One of them denied his Master three times ; another waited to adore Him until He was in His tomb ; another, because He was from Nazareth, refused to believe in His mission ; still another refused to believe in His resurrection ; and finally, one also there was who sold Him to His enemies and betrayed Him by the sign of a kiss ; some, after listening to His lofty words, whose meaning was beyond them, ' went back, and walked no more with Him.'

Jesus was repeatedly obliged to chide His Apostles for the slowness of their understanding. He speaks the parable of the Sower to them and they do not grasp its meaning : ' Know ye not this parable ? And how then will ye know all parables ? ' He exhorts them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, and they think He is speaking of material bread. ' . . . perceive ye not yet, neither understand ? have ye your heart yet hardened ? Having eyes see ye not ? and having ears hear ye not ? and do ye not remember ? '

They are inclined to share the belief of the common people that Jesus is the carnal Messiah, the warrior, whose purpose it was to set up again the temporal throne of David. Even when He is about to ascend into heaven they continue to ask : ' Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel ? ' And before then, after the Resurrection, the two Disciples at Emmaus had said : ' But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel, and beside . . .'

The Disciples disputed among themselves as to who would have the best place in the new Kingdom, and Jesus was obliged to upbraid them, saying : ' What was it that ye disputed about among yourselves by the way ? But they held their peace ; for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.'

Jealous of their own prerogatives, they denounce to

Jesus one who casts out devils in His name, and Jesus' answer is: 'Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.'

A certain discourse at Capernaum gave offence to some. 'Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can bear it?' And they left Him.

Jesus, however, never failed to warn all who would become His followers. A Scribe assures Him he is prepared to follow Him everywhere. 'And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' Another man, and this was one of the Disciples, wished first to go and bury his father. 'But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.' And another said to Him: 'Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell who are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'

One day there came to Him a young man who was very rich and who kept the commandments: 'Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions.'

In order to dwell with Jesus one must leave one's home, one's dead, one's family and treasures—one must renounce all common affections, all common happiness. What He gives in exchange is of such value as to compensate for any sacrifice. But few, however, are capable of such complete renunciation, and some, after having believed, will fail in their purpose.

For the Twelve, who were all poor, renunciation was less painful; nevertheless they did not always succeed in accomplishing what Jesus expected of them, and one day

He said to Peter: 'Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.' But although Christ's sieve was exceeding fine, some bad seed still remained mixed with the good.

XXXIX SIMON CALLED THE ROCK

Previous to the Resurrection Peter was as a body beside a spirit, a voice of matter accompanying the song of the soul. He was as the people waiting, full of hope; as the earth that believes in heaven but remains terrestrial. His uncultured mind still pictured the Kingdom of Heaven as something closely resembling the Messianic Kingdom described by the prophets.

All are familiar with Jesus' pronouncement concerning the rich: 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.' To Peter this sweeping condemnation seemed harsh. 'Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?' One would almost compare him to a money-lender claiming his interest. But to console him Jesus promised that he should sit upon a throne and judge one of the twelve tribes (the other eleven would also each have a tribe to judge), and He added that each would receive a hundred times more than he had relinquished.

Jesus declared that only what comes out of a man can defile him, but Peter failed to grasp His meaning. 'Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?' Among the Disciples, who were all slow to understand, Peter was one of the slowest. His nickname, Cephas, a stone, a piece of rock, did not refer to the firmness of his faith alone (Jesus, indeed, often chided him for his want of faith, of which his final denial is a painful proof), but to the hardness of his head as well.

He was not alert in any sense. He was inclined to fall asleep even at supreme moments. Thus he slept on the mountain where the Transfiguration took place, he slept

in the Garden at Gethsemane, and after the Last Supper, when Jesus had uttered words fit to trouble the sleep even of a Scribe for all eternity. Nevertheless his boldness was great. When, on that last evening, Jesus announced that He must suffer and die, Peter cried out : ' Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death.' But Jesus answered : ' I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.'

Jesus knew him better than he knew himself, and while the high priests were interrogating and insulting his God, Peter, warming himself beside the brazier in Caiaphas' courtyard, thrice denied that he was one of Jesus' followers.

At the moment of the arrest, Peter, regardless of the Master's teachings, made a feint of resistance, smiting Malchus' ear. After years of close association with Jesus, he had not yet realized the fact that any form of material violence was repugnant to His nature. He had failed to understand that, had Jesus wished to save Himself, He could have gone forth in secret and hidden in the desert, or freed Himself from the grasp of the soldiers as He had done before at Nazareth. This act of Peter's He esteemed so lightly that He immediately healed the wound and spoke words of reproof to His impulsive champion.

It was not the first time that Peter had shown himself inferior to circumstances. Like all the uncultured, he was inclined to perceive the dross of matter in spiritual manifestations, what is base in that which is lofty, what is vulgar in that which is tragic. When he awoke on the hill of the Transfiguration, and saw Jesus all resplendent with brightness, conversing with two spirits, two prophets, instead of worshipping in silence, his first thought was of the necessity for erecting a shelter for these august personages, and he cried out : ' Master, it is good for us to be here ; and let us make three tabernacles ; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.' The wise Luke adds, in excuse for this outburst : ' not knowing what he said.'

When Peter saw Jesus walking safely on the waves, the fancy took him to do the same. ' . . . And when

Peter was come down out of the ship he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid ; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? ' The honest fisherman had thought that because he was familiar both with the lake and with Jesus, he could do as his Lord had done, and did not stop to remember that, to become master of the tempest, one must possess a soul immeasurably grander and a faith immeasurably stronger than his own.

This Disciple's strong love for Christ, which atones for all of his weaknesses, led him one day almost to admonish the Master Himself. Jesus had told the Apostles that He was destined to suffer and to be put to death, and hereupon ' . . . Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord ; this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan ; thou art an offence unto me ; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but *those that be of men*.' No one else has ever judged Simon called Peter with such tremendous severity. He had been summoned to labour for the Kingdom of God, and *his thoughts were those of men*. His mind, still imbued with the common idea of triumphant Messiahship, refused to harbour the image of a Messiah persecuted, condemned and put to death. The idea of divine expiation had not as yet been born within him, the idea that salvation cannot be brought without an offering of pain and of blood, and that the body of the Great must be sacrificed to the ferocity of a multitude of small men, in order that these may be illumined by that life and saved by that death. Peter loved Jesus truly, but despite all its strength and tenderness his love still contained an element of earthly affection, and he rebelled at the thought that his King would become an object of scorn, that his God would be made to suffer death. He had been the first, however, to recognize the Christ in Jesus, and this primal virtue is so great that nothing has ever been able to eclipse it.

Not until after the Resurrection did Peter belong entirely

to his Master. When his Lord appeared to him on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, He said to him : ' Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ? ' But after having denied Him, Peter had not the courage to say he loved Him. Half afraid he answered : ' Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee.' But Jesus sought for true love and not mere friendship, and He repeated His question : ' Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ? ' And again Peter protested, saying : ' Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee.' Then Jesus pressed him hard, again demanding : ' Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ? ' Whereupon Peter, unnerved and finally overcome, spoke the words Jesus had been determined to wrench from him : ' Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee.'

Three times in the night that preceded His death Peter had denied the Master. Now, after His victory over death, Peter three times protested his love ; and to this love, destined soon to be illumined by perfect knowledge, he would remain true until the day of his death, in Rome, upon a cross like that whereon his Lord had suffered.

XL THE SONS OF THUNDER

The two brothers—James and John—who were both fishermen, who had left their boat and their nets on the shore at Capernaum to follow Jesus, and who, with Peter, formed a sort of favourite triumvirate (they alone, with the Master, entered the house of Jairus, alone they accompanied Him to the mountain-top where the Transfiguration took place, and only these three did He keep with Him on that night in the Garden of Olives), had not acquired sufficient humility during their long intercourse with the Master. Jesus had surnamed them *Boanerges*, Sons of Thunder, probably with ironical reference to their hot tempers and impetuosity.

When they all set forth together to go towards Jerusalem, Jesus sent some of His Disciples on before to arrange for lodgings. The party crossed Samaria, and at a certain village met with an unfriendly reception. ' And they did

not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them. . . .' These Galileans, who were faithful to Jerusalem, always considered the Samaritans as their enemies. In vain they had listened to the Sermon on the Mount: '. . . do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.' In vain they had repeated the commandments concerning the way in which they should conduct themselves in their intercourse with others: 'And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.' Offended in the person of Jesus, they presumptuously assumed that they would be able to command heaven's fire, and it seemed to them no more than right that a village guilty of inhospitality should be reduced to ashes.

Yet, far removed as they were from that renewal in love which alone constitutes the reality of the divine Kingdom, they nevertheless expected to occupy the best places therein on the day of triumph: 'And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? And they said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask. . . . And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Whosoever will be great among you will be your minister; and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. . . .'

The impetuosity and ingenuousness of these Sons of Thunder afforded the Master an opportunity to repeat those words that appeal so strongly to all who are of a

magnanimous nature; only the cowardly, parasites, the useless and the insignificant demand that even their inferiors shall serve them—if, indeed, there exist any one in the Absolute who is inferior to them—but he who is truly superior, precisely because he is so, is always ready to serve the humble.

This miraculous paradox, which offends the selfishness of the egoist, the presumption of the superman and the poverty of the miserable (for the little he possesses is not sufficient even for himself), is the proof of the fire of genius. He who cannot, who will not serve, reveals the fact that he has nothing to give, that he is impotent, infirm, imperfect, empty; and in like manner genius that does not overflow for the benefit of others is not true genius.

To serve is not always the same thing as to obey. Nations are best served sometimes when one places himself at their head, in order to drag them, perhaps even against their will, to salvation. To serve does not mean to be servile.

James and John grasped the meaning of Jesus' pregnant words. One of them, John, we shall recognize, later on, in the most loving of all the Apostles. At the Last Supper it was his head that rested upon the Master's breast, and from the Cross it was to him the Redeemer entrusted His Mother, that he should cherish her as were he her son.

Thomas owes his popularity to what should have been his greatest shame. Thomas the Twin is the patron saint of modernity as Thomas Aquinas was the oracle of the Middle Ages. He is the orthodox protector of Spinoza and of all those others who deny the possibility of resurrection; the man who is not satisfied with the testimony of his own eyes, but will have that of his hands as well. His love for Jesus, however, rendered him worthy of forgiveness. When they come to tell the Master that Lazarus was dead, His Disciples shrank from the idea of going into Judea among their enemies, and Thomas was the only one who said: '. . . Let us also go, that we may die with him.' The martyrdom which he escaped at that time awaited him later on in India, after the death of Christ.

Matthew is the one of the Twelve we love best. He was

a 'receiver of custom,' a sort of under-publican, and he was probably the least ignorant of his companions. He rallied to Jesus, however, no less eagerly than the poor fishermen had done. 'And he went forth and saw a publican named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he said unto him, Follow me; and *he left all*, rose up, and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house. . . .' Matthew was not leaving merely a heap of ragged nets, he was giving up a position, a stipend, sure and ever-increasing gain. To relinquish their possessions was a slight matter to them who possessed hardly anything. Of the Twelve, Matthew was certainly the richest before his conversion, for of no other has it been said that he was in a position to give a 'great feast,' and his prompt obedience, the fact that he left his counter at the first summons, his counter whereon the silver lay in piles, constitutes a greater and more meritorious sacrifice than that of the others.

To Matthew, who was perhaps the only one besides Judas who knew how to write, we owe—if the very ancient testimony of Papia is to be trusted—the first collection of 'memorable sayings' attributed to Jesus. In his Gospel we find the most complete version of the Sermon on the Mount. Mankind owes the poor receiver of custom still more gratitude than it gives him, for had it not been for him many of Jesus' words, the most beautiful, indeed, might have been lost to us. This man who had handled drachmas and shekels, whom his calling, which was considered shameful, might well have predisposed to avarice, collected for us a treasure that is of greater value than all the money coined on earth before and since his day.

Philip of Bethsaida also knew how to reckon. When the hungry multitude pressed around Him it was to Philip that Jesus appealed to know how much it would take to purchase bread for so many, and 'Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them.' That sum, about one hundred and sixty *lire* of our money,[1] probably seemed enormous to him.

[1] Equal to about £6 in normal rate of exchange.

Philip was destined to spread his Master's fame. He it was who announced the advent of Christ to Nathanael, and it was to him the Greeks of Jerusalem appealed when they sought an interview with the new Prophet.

Nathanael, son of Tholomai, and better known, in fact, as Bartholomew, returned a sarcastic answer to Philip's announcement: 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' he said. But Philip persuaded him to come into the presence of Jesus, who, on seeing him, exclaimed: 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!' Then Nathanael asked Him: 'Whence knowest thou me?' and Jesus answered, 'Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.' And Nathanael cried out: 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel!' And Jesus replied: 'Because I said unto thee I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these.'

Nicodemus was less enthusiastic and impulsive, and, in fact, never wished to appear as one of Jesus' Disciples. He was old; he had frequented the schools of the rabbis, and was on friendly terms with the members of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem; but reports he had heard of the miracles wrought by Jesus had moved him deeply, and he came to Him *at night*, to tell Him that he believed God had sent Him; and 'Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus either did not understand the meaning of these words or was dismayed by them; he had expected to find a miracle-worker and he had found an oracle; and with the good sense and caution of one who fears to be deceived, he demanded: 'How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus' answer is fraught with deep meaning: 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' But Nicodemus still fails to understand. 'How can these things be?' he asks, and Jesus answers: 'Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?'

The old man always retained a sense of respect for the young Galilean, but his sentiment was as circumspect as his visit had been. On one occasion, when the chief priests and the Pharisees were planning to seize Jesus, Nicodemus did indeed risk a word in His defence : ' Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth ? ' He is a legalist, and speaks not as the new man but in the name of *our* law. Nicodemus never cast out the old Adam ; he remained ever the legal-minded, cautious observer of the letter. A few words of reproof sufficed to silence him. ' Art thou also of Galilee ? Search, and look ; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet,' the chief priest tells him. He belonged by right to the Sanhedrin, but nowhere is it stated that he raised his voice in defence of the Accused, brought before Caiaphas. This event also took place at night, and it is not improbable that, in order to avoid incurring the contempt of his colleagues, and also the remorse he would have suffered had he participated in this legal murder, he remained in bed. Nor did he awake until after Jesus' death, then—regardless of expense !—he purchased one hundredweight of myrrh and aloes wherewith to embalm Him. He who had raised the dead was dead, and he who had doubted would never experience that rebirth in which he had refused to believe.

Nicodemus is the eternal prototype of the lukewarm whom the mouth of the Almighty will spit out on the day of wrath. He is the soul of mediocrity ; his spirit urges him to say yes, but his flesh dictates the no of pusillanimity. He is the student of the texts, the disciple of the night, who would be a disciple indeed, but without his appearing to be one ; who would not object to being born again, but who is incapable of breaking through the thick bark that envelops his old body ; he is at once respectful and diffident. When He whom he had admired had been tortured and put to death, when His enemies were satisfied and there was no longer any danger of compromising himself, Nicodemus once more appeared on the scene, bringing balm to pour into those wounds his own cowardice had helped to inflict.

The Church, however, rewarded his posthumous piety

by enrolling him among her saints, and there is a tradition to the effect that he was baptized by Peter and eventually suffered martyrdom for his faith in Him he had failed to save from death.

XLI SHEEP, SERPENTS AND DOVES

Having chosen them Himself, Jesus knew these men well who were to proclaim His Word throughout the world. Common tallow, if it have a wick, can light up a hovel; a dry branch from a fir-tree, when it is aflame, can reveal his way to one who has lost it and keep the hyena at bay. The Chief in the war against the world made use of such poor soldiers as fate had provided to His hand. Probably at no other epoch in history would He have found any better material. In accordance with a mysterious plan He purposely chose them among the most ordinary of men, that the wonder of His superhuman, posthumous victory should be revealed the more dazzlingly.

Their task might well have daunted the courage of men of far greater learning and intelligence. Ingenuousness, ignorance, and even superstition are less paralysing to courage, however, than other spiritual attributes frequently found in modern man.

Of His ambassadors Christ demanded something that at first sight appears almost impossible, something one could demand only of the simple, in whom, by the miracle of their very simplicity, the impossible sometimes becomes possible. '. . . I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.' He sends them as peaceful animals among wild beasts; they must not allow themselves to be devoured, however, but rather must they reduce those whose nature it is to rend the lamb, to the gentleness of the lamb; and in order to ensure their success in this paradoxical undertaking, the great Master of Paradox exhorts his ambassadors to be at once as wise as the serpent and as harmless as the dove. 'Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' The coarse and animal psychology of the vulgar may well revolt against this association. The

reptile of the betrayal may not dwell in the nest of the white bird of love. The nature of the serpent that was the cause of Adam's expulsion from Eden differs too widely from that of the faithful dove that brought to Noah the symbol of the return of peace. The poisonous reptile that crawls in the shadow has nothing in common with the white-winged bird that wheels lightly in the sunlight.

But the thoughts of the uncultured contain much material of an erroneous character. Simplicity is a power that is superior to all artfulness. Prudence is not cunning. The first success is always with the cunning, but in the end they are invariably defeated. The ingenuous may appear to be fools, but final results never fail to prove that their apparent foolishness was but a form of prudence more powerful than any cunning. The simple, the ignorant, the unsullied possess a power that confounds even the most crafty—the power of innocence. The child whose questions puzzle the sage, the peasant whose answers reduce the philosopher to silence are the most familiar symbols of the triumphant power of innocence. Simplicity inspires words and actions that surpass all the subtle inventions of diplomacy itself.

Those whom Jesus sent forth to conquer souls were but rude villagers indeed, but they were capable of being—consistently and without difficulty—as meek as sheep, as wise as serpents, and as simple as doves—sheep without timidity, serpents without venom, doves without sensuality.

It was the first duty of these soldiers to strip themselves of everything. Setting out in search of the poor, they were obviously bound to be more destitute than the poorest themselves. But they were not beggars, 'for the workman is worthy of his meat.' The bread of life which they would bestow upon them who hungered for justice was well worth a loaf of wheaten bread in exchange. The labourers must go to their marvellous task empty-handed. 'Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves.' Metal, that heavy medium of riches, does but weigh down the spirit—its weight drags the spirit into the

depths. The shining of gold makes one forget the brilliance of the sun, the shining of silver makes one forget the brilliance of the stars, the shining of brass makes one forget the brilliance of the flame. He who cleaves to metal has espoused the earth and remains attached to its possessions ; he knows not heaven, nor does heaven recognize him.

It is not enough to preach love of poverty to the poor, to tell them of the rich beauty of poverty. The poor do not believe the words of the rich until the rich are become poor by choice. The Apostles, who were to preach of the joys of poverty to the rich and the poor alike, must themselves be living examples of that which they teach, displaying that joy, day by day, to all men and in all places. They must carry nothing with them save the clothes they wear, and the shoes that are upon their feet ; they must accept nothing save the ' daily bread ' they will find upon the tables of them who give them shelter. The nomad priests of certain Oriental divinities carried with them, beside their idols, a sack for offerings, because the vulgar esteem but lightly those things that cost them nothing. But the Apostles of Jesus must refuse all gifts and payments. ' Freely ye have received, freely give.' Moreover, as riches are often changed from metals into goods that they may be more easily concealed, the heralds of the Kingdom must go forth without so much as a change of raiment, a second pair of shoes or even a staff—they must do without everything that is not absolutely indispensable.

They are to go into the houses and converse with the men and women who dwell therein ; into the houses open to all in a country as yet unacquainted with locks, symbols of fear, a country still retaining a vague memory of the hospitality of nomad tribes. Their mission is to announce that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand ; to explain how the kingdom of the earth may become that of heaven and proclaim the only means whereby this happy fulfilment of all the prophesies may be attained—by repentance, conversion and spiritual transformation. To prove that they have indeed been sent forth by One who possesses the right to demand this change, they are given power to heal

the sick, to cast out evil spirits by their word—to cast out those demons and vices that make demons of men.

Not only do they command that man should renew his spiritual being, but they also help him by means of all the powers that have been bestowed upon them, to set about this most arduous task. Having proclaimed the prophetic message—the Kingdom is at hand—they become once more labourers and set about restoring, cleansing and reconstructing the soul of humanity which its lawful shepherds have left to perish in the leafless forest of Mosaic formalism. Having imparted their knowledge in order that others should become worthy of the new celestial home, they become willing helpers with the task they have imposed. To complete the paradox, it may be said that the Apostle is at once the assassin and he who raises from the dead. In every convert he slays the old Adam, but his word is the baptism that brings about a second birth. Pilgrims without purse or bag, these men carried with them truth and life—Peace.

'And when ye come into an house, salute it' in these words: 'Peace be with you.' Peace be on the house that gives them welcome; but he who closes his door against them shall continue his struggle for life unaided; on their leaving the house or the city that has repulsed them, they shall shake the dust from their feet. Not that the dust of the house or city is unclean and evil, but because of the symbolical answer to their deafness and hardness of heart. You have refused all we offered and we will not accept anything from you, not even as much as the dust that adheres to our sandals. For as you (who are but dust, and destined to return to dust) are unwilling to spare us a moment of your time and a morsel of your bread, we will leave with you the dust of your roadways, even to the last grain.

The Apostles, faithful to the sublime absurdity of Him who sends them, bring both peace and war. In the same family, the same house, there will be some who will believe and others who will not. Divisions and strife will ensue—this being the price that must be paid for perfect and

lasting peace. If all were converted and all would listen to the voice on the same day, at the same moment, the Kingdom of Heaven would be established instantly, and the bloodshed and strife that must precede its foundation would thus be avoided.

Those who refuse to change, either because they misunderstand the message, or because they deem themselves already perfect, those will lay hands upon the missionaries and bring them before the judges. Those who prize riches and the Old Law will persecute these poor men who teach the New Law to the poor. The rich will not acknowledge that his wealth is but a dangerous source of poverty; the Scribes will not admit that their wisdom is but deadly ignorance. '. . . They will scourge you in their synagogues.'

'But when they deliver you up take no thought how or what ye shall speak.' Jesus knows that the poor fishermen, although they possess no learning, will, by His inspiration, be able to speak the weighty words that are necessary for their defence. A single thought, if it be a great thought and one deeply rooted in the mind, generates all those others that are its derivatives or accessories, and their most perfect form of expression as well. The man whose mind is barren, who has no faith in anything, who neither feels, glows nor suffers, will always remain incapable—even though he may have grown old in the company of the sophists of Athens and the rhetoricians of Rome—of improvising one of those enlightening and thrilling refutations which cannot fail to trouble the conscience even of the harshest of judges.

Let them speak out fearlessly then, and without seeking to hide anything that has been taught them. 'What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in the light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops.' These words do not imply that Jesus asks His Disciples to be more daring than He was Himself. He spoke in darkness, that is to say, in private, and to His first followers; but what He said to them in desert places and in quiet rooms, they are to repeat, as He did Himself, in the market-

place of cities and in the hearing of great multitudes. He had whispered the truth in their ear, for truth, heard for the first time, may frighten those who are unprepared, and also, because they were but few in number, there was no reason why the Master should raise His voice. But the truth must now be proclaimed from high places that all may hear it, in order that, on the Great Day, no one may be able to say the voice did not reach him. That great treasure—the Good Tidings—is to be distributed among the poor as if it were a treasure consisting of land or of some precious metal.

Although men may indeed kill the body of him who brings truth, they can never destroy his soul, and through the example of the death of one such body, thousands of new souls may be born to life. The Apostles, however, are told that not even their bodies shall perish, for there is One who watches over them. 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.' The birds of the air that sow not do not starve; you who do not carry so much as a staff will not perish at the hands of your enemies.

They bear with them a secret so precious that the flesh that contains it may not be destroyed. Jesus is always with them, even when they are far away. Whatsoever is done unto them is done unto Him also. A mystical identity is established for all time between Him who sends them forth and them who are sent. 'And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall not lose his reward.'

Christ is the fountain of living water that shall quench the thirst of all who drink thereof; nevertheless He will remember the cup of water that shall have refreshed the least among His friends. Those who bear with them the water of truth that purifies and saves may one day have need of the hard water that lies hidden at the bottom of a village well. Whosoever shall offer them a cup of this

ordinary and earthly water shall receive in exchange a spring that will uplift the soul into an ecstasy such as not even the strongest wine can impart.

The Apostles who go about with but a single garment and one pair of sandals, who have neither girdle nor sack, who are as poor as poverty itself, as naked as truth, as simple as joy, although they may appear to be destitute, are in reality the different forms assumed by a King who is come to found a Kingdom vaster and happier than any other; to bestow upon the poor a treasure more precious than any that can be weighed, to bring joy to the unhappy higher than any form of pleasure life can give. Like the kings of the East this new King is pleased to show Himself in various shapes, to appear to men in many different garbs, and sometimes even in disguise. But the disguises He loves best, even to-day, are three in number—that of the Poet, of the Poor Man, of the Apostle.

XLII MAMMON

Jesus is the Poor Man; the Poor Man who is strictly, absolutely, infinitely poor. He is the Prince of Poverty, The Lord of Utter Destitution; the Poor Man who dwells with the poor, gives to the poor, converses with the poor, labours for the poor. He is the Poor Man great in His eternal poverty, who is rich and happy, who accepts poverty, desires poverty, weds with poverty, extols poverty. He is the Mendicant who distributes alms; One who, Himself naked, clothes the naked; One who, Himself famishing, yet feeds others. He is the miraculous and superhuman Pauper, who changes the falsely rich into paupers and makes the poor truly rich.

Some are poor because they have never been able to earn money. Others are poor because they give away each night what they have earned in the morning; and the more they give away the more they have. Their wealth increases in proportion with their generosity; it is a heap that grows larger the more there is taken from it.

This is the class of poor to whom Jesus belonged. In

comparison with one of these, the rich according to the flesh, the world and matter, the rich with their strong boxes of talents, rupees, florins, kronen, ducats, pounds, francs, marks, and dollars, are but pitiful paupers. Compared with these the money-changers of the Forum, the usurers of Jerusalem, the bankers of Florence and Frankfort, the peers of England, the millionaires of New York are but unfortunate, destitute and needy beings. They are but the unpaid servants of a cruel master, condemned each day to murder their own souls, and they are so loathsome that not even the poor can bestow alms in the shape of a smile upon them.

Like work, wealth is a punishment, but a far more severe and shameful punishment. He who is branded with the sign of wealth has committed, unconsciously perhaps, an awful crime, one of those mysterious and unspeakable crimes that have no name in the language of man. The rich man lies prone beneath the weight of God's vengeance, and God puts him to the test to ascertain whether he will be able to rise up and soar to the heights of divine poverty. For the rich man has committed the greatest of sins, the most abominable, the unpardonable sin. The rich man has bartered away his own salvation. He could have had heaven and he chose earth, he could have dwelt in paradise and he chose to dwell in hell, he could have preserved his soul and he gave it in exchange for matter, he could have loved and he preferred to be hated, he could have had happiness and he desired only power. No one can save him. Money in his hands is the metal beneath whose icy weight he is buried alive; it is the sore that corrupts his flesh while he yet lives; it is the fire that burns and shrivels him, making of him a mummy, that is black, deaf, dumb, blind and palsied; a ghostly body that holds out its empty hands for all eternity in the burial-places of the centuries. And this unrecognizable pauper is denied even the alms of remembrance.

For such as he there is but one way to salvation; he must become poor again, once more become a really poor and meek being; he must cast from him the horrible misery of wealth and join the ranks of the poor. But this step

is the most difficult of all for a rich man to take. Precisely because he has been spoiled and corrupted by wealth, the rich man is incapable of comprehending that the complete renunciation of riches would be the beginning of his redemption; and, being unable even to conceive of such a renunciation, he cannot form any resolution and weigh the alternatives. He is a prisoner in the strong prison-house of self. In order to free himself he should already be free.

The rich man does not belong to himself. He belongs—he who is an animate being—to what is inanimate. He has no time to reflect or choose. Money is a pitiless master who tolerates no other besides himself. Devoting all his attention to the care of his wealth, striving ever to increase it, revelling in the material pleasures his wealth procures him, the rich man cannot think of his soul. He is not even conscious that his sick, stifled, mutilated, corrupt soul stands in need of healing. He dwells, body and soul, in that part of the world which, according to contracts and laws, he has the right to call *his own*, but which often he has neither the time, the wish nor the strength to enjoy. He must serve it and save it, and he does not give himself the time to save his own soul. His entire capacity for loving is centred upon this heap of matter which has become his master, which has supplanted his soul, and deprived him of every remnant of freedom.

The rich man's horrible fate is contained in this double paradox, that in order to obtain power over living men, he is become the slave of things that are dead, and that in order to obtain a part—a very small part, indeed—he has forfeited the whole.

Nothing is ours while it continues to be ours only. Man cannot really possess anything save himself. The true secret of obtaining other things is to relinquish them. To him who gives up everything, everything shall be given; but he who appropriates for himself alone a portion of this world's goods, loses, at the same time, what he acquires and all the rest as well. Also he immediately becomes incapable of knowing himself, of possessing and bettering himself. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is left to him. He

does not even own his own soul, which is the only piece of property worth owning. He is the most forlorn and destitute creature in the whole world. How then can he love his fellow-men, bestow upon them himself and all that is his, performing those acts of loving charity that would so soon lead him to the Kingdom.

He is nothing and has nothing. He who does not exist cannot change; he who does not possess cannot give. How, then, can the rich man, who is no longer his own, who no longer has a soul, change that one possession of man, and make it something grander and far more precious?

'For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' This question of Christ's, simple as are all revelations, gives us a true understanding of the prophetic threat. The rich man, dragged down to the depths by his wealth, loses not only eternity, but his life in this world, his soul during this life and the joys of this life as well.

'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.' The spirit and gold are two masters who suffer neither division nor association. They are two jealous masters, and they will have the whole being; no man, even though he may desire to do so, can divide himself. Gold to him who serves the spirit is naught; the spirit to him who serves gold becomes a meaningless word. He who chooses the spirit, casts away not only gold but that which it may be exchanged for; he who strives to obtain gold does away with the spirit and renounces all spiritual benefits—peace, holiness, love, perfect happiness. The first is a poor man who never succeeds in consuming his boundless wealth; the other is a rich man who never succeeds in escaping from his awful poverty. By virtue of the mysterious law of renunciation, the poor man possesses even that which is not his, that is to say, the universe; and by virtue of the cruel law of perpetual desire, the rich man does not even possess that little he believes to be his own. God gives infinitely more than the much He promises; Mammon takes away that little he promises.

A close study of the horrible mystery of wealth explains

why the masters of men have always regarded it as the devil's true kingdom. A thing that is in itself worth less than anything else is paid more for than anything else. A thing that is naught, is acquired by sacrificing everything else, by giving one's very soul, one's whole life in exchange. What is most precious is bartered for what is most worthless.

Yet even this strange paradox has its reason to be, in the economy of the spirit. Man is so naturally and universally attracted by that nothing called wealth that, in order to deter him from its insane pursuit, it was necessary to make the price of its achievement so enormous, so exorbitant, so disproportionate that the very fact that a man was willing to pay for it was an irrefutable proof of his wickedness and madness. But not even the absurd conditions of the bargain—the exchange of eternal possession for that which is ephemeral, power for slavery, holiness for damnation—can suffice to deter mankind from concluding it. The poor grieve only because they are not rich; their souls are as corrupt and in as great danger as those of the rich. They are almost all of them poor against their will, men who have been unable to grasp any gold, but have nevertheless lost their spiritual selves; they are the miserable rich who have nothing as yet.

The only form of poverty that gives true wealth—that gives spiritual wealth—is poverty freely accepted, joyously welcomed; absolute poverty, that sets us free to conquer the absolute. The Kingdom of Heaven does not involve a promise of their growing rich to the poor, but its condition of admission is that the rich become poor of their own free will.

The tragic paradox which wealth implies justifies Jesus' oft-repeated advice to them who would follow Him.

All must give of their superfluity to those who have less, but the rich must give all. Jesus' reply to the young man who asked Him what he must do to become one of His followers was: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' To give away wealth is neither to make a sacrifice nor to bear a loss. To Jesus, as to all who know, it is to gain immeasurably. 'Sell all ye have, and give

alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also. . . . Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. . . . It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

We must give freely, without stint. He who gives in view of the material compensation he may receive is not perfect, and he acquires nothing in so doing. The recompense is elsewhere—it is within us. We must not give away our goods in the hope of receiving other goods in payment, but in order that purity and contentment may be our reward. 'When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.'

Even before the time of Jesus, men were admonished to renounce riches. Jesus was not the first to make of poverty one of the rungs of the ladder that leads to perfection. The great Vardhâmana, the *Jina* or Triumpher, added renunciation of all possessions to the commandments of Parçva. Buddha, his contemporary, also exhorted his disciples to renounce riches. The Cynics rid themselves of all material possessions that they might be independent of labour and of their fellow-men, and with a free mind consecrate themselves to truth. Crates, a nobleman of Thebes and a disciple of Diogenes, distributed his possessions among his fellow-citizens and became a mendicant. Plato expressed the wish that the warriors of the Republic should possess nothing. The Stoics, clad in purple and seated at tables inlaid with rare stones, were eloquent in the praise of poverty. On the stage, Aristophanes showed us the blind Plutus dispensing treasures to the wicked alone, as were it by way of punishment.

But in Jesus the love of poverty is neither an ascetic

rule nor a garment of proud ostentation. Timon of Athens, who long maintained a troop of parasites and whose indiscriminate generosity finally reduced him to penury, was not the poor man after the heart of Jesus. Timon became poor because of his vainglorious nature; he had given to all without distinction, even to them who were not needy, in order that he might acquire a reputation for liberality and generosity. Crates, who deprived himself of everything in imitation of Diogenes, was but a slave to his own vanity; he wished to do something that others did not do, to be called a philosopher and a sage. The Cynics who held out their hands were but indulging in a picturesque form of arrogance, and the poverty of Plato's warriors was a measure of great political prudence. For poverty is an essential element in a state in course of ascending formation. The first republic triumphed and flourished, as also did Sparta and Rome, so long as their citizens were satisfied to be poor; and it began to decline as soon as gold came to be thought more of than sober and virtuous living. The ancients did not despise wealth in itself; they deemed it dangerous only when it began to accumulate in the hands of a few; they condemned it as unlawful when it was not used with judicious munificence. Plato, however, who would have liked to see all men equally far removed from abundance and penury, placed wealth among man's blessings. He placed it last, indeed, but he did not overlook it. As for Aristophanes, he would have fallen on his knees before Plutus had the blind god regained his sight and begun to distribute riches among the eminently respectable.

In the Gospel poverty is neither a philosophical ornament nor a mystic pose. Poverty alone will not open the gates of the Kingdom to any man. To become poor does not mean that one at once becomes perfect. Material as well as spiritual poverty are but the preliminary requisite for those who, having fathomed the abyss they were in, strive to reach the top; material possessions are like bandages that blind the eyes and imprison the wings, preventing one from that appetence which leads to possessions alone essential in human life.

The poor man, when his poverty does not cause him any suffering, when he glories in it instead of wearing himself out in the struggle to change it into affluence, is far nearer moral perfection than the rich man. But the rich man who has stripped himself for the benefit of the poor and has chosen to live in close contact with his newly-acquired brethren, is still nearer perfection than is he who was born and bred in poverty. That such wonderful and rare grace should have been granted him is in itself a guarantee for the realization of all his hopes. To renounce what one has never possessed may be meritorious, because imagination magnifies things that are absent; but to renounce everything one has ever possessed, what others have coveted, is a sure sign of the possibility of achieving perfection.

The poor man who is sober, chaste, simple and easily satisfied because he lacks both the faculty and the occasions to indulge himself, is inclined to seek compensation in pleasures that do not cost money, and a certain spiritual superiority, which those who indulge in the grosser forms of pleasure cannot know, gives him an advantage over them. Not infrequently, however, his virtues are but the result of impotence or ignorance; he does not transgress because he has not the power to do so, he does not accumulate treasures because he possesses only what is indispensable, he does not drink and revel in pleasures because both tavern-keepers and prostitutes must be paid. His life, which is often hard, passed in labouring for others and devoid of any brightness, is in itself an expiation of his sins. Suffering makes him look upwards for consolation. We do so little for the poor that we have no right to judge them. Neglected as they are by their brother-men, held at a distance by them who might have power to touch their hearts, avoided by all to whom their filthy surroundings are abhorrent, excluded from that world of intellect and art wherein they might, at times, find temporary relief for their sufferings, the poor remain the least impure in the midst of all the misery that encompasses mankind. Were they better loved, they would be more perfect; will those who have neglected them have the courage to condemn them?

Jesus loved the poor. He loved them because He pitied them ; because He felt they possessed more of His own spirit, and were better prepared to understand Him. He loved them because they provided Him, day by day, with the happiness to be derived from serving others, from feeding the hungry, strengthening the weak and imparting hope to the suffering.

Jesus loved the poor for reasons of pure justice. He deemed them to be the most legitimate heirs to the Kingdom ; because, by stimulating his generosity, they rendered more easy the rich man's duty of renunciation. But, above all others, He loved the poor who had once been rich and who, for love of the Kingdom, were become poor. Their renunciation was the greatest act of faith in His promise. They had given what, in the absolute, is naught, but in the eyes of the world is all, for the certainty of a more perfect life to come. They had conquered in themselves one of man's most deeply-rooted instincts. Jesus, born poor, amidst poor people, never forsook His brethren. Upon them He lavished the abundance of His divine poverty. But in His heart He yearned to find the poor man who had not always been poor ; the rich man who was ready to become poor for the love of Him. He sought such a man—but probably never found him. Nevertheless, He felt a more tender and fraternal attachment for this longed-for but undiscovered being than for any one of the submissive crowd of mendicants who thronged around Him.

XLIII THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

Let men as yet to come take warning—the hands of Jesus never touched a piece of money. In those hands of His that moulded the clay wherewith He anointed the eyes of one who was blind and restored his sight ; those hands that touched the corruption of lepers and of the dead ; those hands that embraced the body of Judas which was far more sullied than clay, leprosy and corruption ; in those white, pure hands that were raised to heal and to bless, that nothing could contaminate, not one even of these

metal disks that bear in relief the effigy of the world's masters was ever suffered to rest. Jesus may mention many different sorts of coins in those fables of His that are more true than truth itself; He may look upon them while in the hands of others, but never did He touch them. To Him who shrank from nothing, they were loathsome. They filled him with a sense of disgust that was akin to horror. His whole nature revolted at the thought of this symbol of wealth.

When He was asked for tribute-money for the Temple He would not even take it from His friend's purse, but bade Peter cast his net, and the first fish taken had in its mouth twice the amount that was due. This miracle contains an element of sublime irony that all have overlooked. Jesus would seem to say: 'I possess no coins, but they are so common and contemptible that at My word the water and the earth will bring them forth. The lake itself is full of them. I know where they are, and in such profusion are they that the smallest ones alone would suffice to buy all the priests of the Temple and the kings of the nations, but I move not a finger to gather them up. One of My servants will take them from the jaws of a fish and give them to the collector of tribute, because it appears that the priests cannot live without them. Dumb animals may be the bearers of coins; I am so rich that I will not even look upon them. I am not a dumb animal but a spirit that speaks, and spirits carry neither coins nor purses. It is not I then who give you this coin, it is the lake that provides it. I do not need to purchase anything, and I give away everything I possess. My inexhaustible fortune is the Word.'

One day, however, even Christ was forced to look upon a piece of money. They asked Him whether it be lawful for a true Israelite to give tribute. Without hesitation He commanded: 'Shew me the tribute-money,' and they obeyed, but He would not touch it. It was a coin of the Empire, a Roman coin, and it bore the likeness of Augustus. He, however, chose to be ignorant concerning this effigy, and inquired: 'Whose is this image and superscription?'

And they answered : ' Cæsar's.' Hereupon Jesus answered to His cunning interlocutors these words that filled them with amazement : ' Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's ; and unto God the things that are God's.'

These few words have many meanings, but for the present it is sufficient to examine the one meaning contained in the single word *render*. Render what is not yours. Money does not belong to us. It has been created by the great to satisfy the needs of power. It is the property of kings and kingdoms—not of our Kingdom. The king represents force and is the protector of riches ; but we have nothing to do with violence, and we decline riches. Our Kingdom contains neither the mighty nor the rich ; the Heavenly King coins no money. Money is a means which leads to the exchanging of earthly goods, but we do not seek earthly goods. What little we need—a little sunshine, a little air, a little water, a crust of bread, and a cloak—is freely bestowed upon us by God and His friends. But your whole life is a long, continuous strain to accumulate a certain quantity of these disks with their engraved images. We should not know what to do with them. We regard them as superfluous. Therefore do we give them back to him who coined them, who stamped his likeness upon them that all may know they are his. Jesus never needed to restore, because He never received a coin. He commanded His Disciples to set forth on their travels without a bag for offerings. To this rule, however, He made one exception, an exception fit to make the boldest quake. A short sentence inserted in one of the Gospels tells us that one of the Apostles had charge of the ' bag.' This Disciple was Judas. But even Judas felt impelled to *render* the money of the betrayal before going to his death. Judas is the mysterious victim who was sacrificed to the curse of money.

Money brings with it, beside the grease from the hands of them who have clutched and handled it, the inexorable contagion of crime. Of all the filthy things man has manufactured wherewith to contaminate both the earth and himself, money is the filthiest.

Those counters of coined metal that pass daily through hands reeking with sweat, hands still wet with blood, that are worn by the fingering of thieves, traffickers, bankers, mediators and misers ; that all desire, seek for, steal, covet and love better than love itself, often better than life itself ; those dirty scraps of engraved matter that the assassin gives to his accomplice, the usurer to him who is starving, the heretics to the simoniac, the libertine to her who is bought and sold ; these foul and disgusting vehicles of evil, that can persuade a son to murder his father, a wife to deceive her husband, a brother to cheat his brother, a sinful pauper to stab a sinful plutocrat, a servant to steal from his master, an outlaw to strip the wayfarer, one nation to attack another—these coins, these material emblems of matter, are the most frightful of all the objects man has created. Money, that has already killed so many bodies, is every day murdering thousands of souls. More dangerously contagious than the rags of him who has died of plague, it is brought into each house, it shines on the counters of money-changers, concealed in drawers, contaminates the sleeper's pillow, is hidden in the stuffy corners of secret places, soils the innocent hands of little children, tempts the young maiden, pays the executioner, circulates everywhere, inflaming hatred, arousing cupidity, hastening corruption and death. . . .

He who is pure cannot touch money ; the saint abhors it ; for both the pure and the saint are keenly alive to its loathsomeness, and have the same horror of money that the rich have of poverty.

XLIV THE KINGS OF THE NATIONS

'Whose is this image ?' Jesus asks when the Roman coin is displayed to him.

Is He not well acquainted with that face ? All men are. Does He not know by what continuous and marvellous good-fortune Octavianus has risen to the rank of monarch of the world bearing the flattering title of Augustus ? Jesus knows the falsely youthful profile, the head covered with

thickly clustering curls, its large nose, hiding the cruelty of the small, thin-lipped, tightly-shut mouth. It is a head that, like all the heads of kings on their coins, is detached from the bust, divided from the body, cut off at the neck—a sinister image of voluntary and eternal decapitation.

Jesus will not pronounce the Emperor's name because He does not recognize his power. Cæsar is the king of the world; Jesus is the King of a new kingdom set up against the world, and wherein there will be no more kings. Cæsar is the king of the past; the head of armies, the coiner of gold and of silver, the fallible administrator of inadequate justice. Jesus is the King of the future, He who brings freedom to them who serve, who renounces riches, who is the Teacher of love. These two rulers have nothing in common. Jesus is come to overthrow the domination of Cæsar, to break up the Roman Empire and all other empires of the earth, but not to take Cæsar's place. If men would but listen to Him there would be no more Cæsars. Jesus is not the heir who conspires against the reigning sovereign that he may usurp his place, but the peaceful destroyer of all rulers. Cæsar is the strongest and most famous of His rivals, and also the most widely separated from Him, because Cæsar's power is founded upon the somnolence of mankind, upon the infirmities of nations; whereas He is now come who awakens them that sleep, who opens the eyes of the blind, who restores the strength of the weak. When all shall be consummated and the Kingdom founded—a Kingdom needing no soldiers, judges, slaves nor money, but only new and loving souls—Cæsar's empire will vanish like a heap of ashes before the conquering breath of the wind.

As long as Cæsar endures (in appearance) we may render unto him what is his. To the new man money is naught. Let us render unto Cæsar, who is destined to become as naught, that silver which is naught, which is not even ours.

Jesus, who looks forward with all the passion of desire to the coming of the second earthly paradise, takes no heed of governments, because in the new country He

foretells there will be no need of them. A nation of saints who love one another would have no use for kings, tribunals and armies. The Divine Liberator is come also to upset human politics. Once only does He speak of kings, and then it is but to confute a general and firmly established opinion. 'And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.' Here is the theory of perfect equality in the human order. The great and the small; the king and the slave; the master and the servant. If he who governs be like him who serves, then the contrary is true also, and he who serves is like him who governs. There may be saints who are more zealous than the righteous, holy men who were sinners until the eleventh hour, innocent beings who were citizens of the Kingdom from the very hour of their birth. There may be differences of spiritual grandeur in the perfection common to all, but at the end of time all categories of superiors and inferiors, of masters and subjects, will be abolished. Even when badly exercised, authority presupposes a flock to lead, a minority to punish, bestial instincts to be kept in check. But when all men shall be saints there will be no further need of commands and obedience, of laws and punishments, of guides and expedients. The kingdom of the spirit can dispense with the dictates of force.

Man will no longer hate his brother-man and no longer desire riches; and all need and reason for government will be abolished by these two mighty changes. The road that leads to perfect freedom is not called destruction but holiness, and is not to be found either in the sophisms of Godwin or of Stirner, of Proudhon or of Kropotkine, but only in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The conversion of all mankind to the Gospel has not been accomplished as yet, however; kings are still necessary. Animals must have their keepers, and the more obstinate and rebellious they are the more strongly must

their keepers be armed. But the human animal, rendered more savage by pride, holds that numbers can take the place of the unit, that what is low may take the place of what is high, and it will have no more kings. Kings who are true kings, who, even though they be of only average ability, are nevertheless superior to the ever-changing caprices of the blind and insane masses : kings who govern with that authority which, to be efficacious, must be centred in the unit, and who are responsible only before God for their errors (which are always less atrocious than those of the masses), such kings as these mankind will no longer have. Mankind is incapable of loving them or even of tolerating them. They prefer a troop of petty tyrants who are inefficient and grasping and by whom they are squeezed and mulcted in the name of the law. They prefer these tyrants because an atmosphere of licence surrounds their tyranny, which weighs as heavily as true authority without possessing any of its advantages. Centuries ago true kings vanished from the earth, and yet the ' devourers of husks ' that still inhabit it are become no better. They are, indeed, no longer capable of that obedience which is necessary in the brute, and are not yet worthy to enjoy the divine freedom of the holy.

XLV FIRE AND THE SWORD

Whenever the flatterers of the great seek to justify the ambition of the ambitious, the violence of the violent, the ferocity of the fierce, the pugnacity of the pugnacious, the conquests of conquerors ; whenever salaried sophists or delirious rhetoricians seek to reconcile pagan savagery with Christian meekness, to use the cross as a handle for the sword, to justify the spilling of blood from motives of hatred by the blood that was shed on Calvary to teach the Gospel of love ; whenever, in a word, man seeks to justify war by the doctrine of peace and to make Christ a shield for Jengis-Khan and Bonaparte, or (by a refinement of infamy) the forerunner of Mahomet, that Bible text which we all know by heart, but which very few understand, is

inevitably brought forward with all the promptness that distinguishes the enunciation of a commonplace :—

'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth ; I came not to send peace, but a sword.' Others who are immeasurably more learned add the words : 'I am come to set fire on the earth.' And others still, who are blessed with a prodigious memory, hasten to quote the decisive verse : '. . . and the violent take it (the Kingdom of Heaven) by force.'

What angel endowed with eloquence, what superhuman enlightener, will ever be able to reveal to these hardened bandiers of quotations the true meaning of the words they repeat with such glib assurance ? They separate them from the evangelical contexts with all the delicacy an orang-outang gathering flowers in Titania's garden might display. They study neither the words that precede nor those that follow ; they take no account of the occasion on which these sentences were spoken ; not for an instant do they doubt that they can have another meaning than the one generally accepted.

When Jesus says that He is come to send a sword—or, as Luke has it, to send 'division'—He is addressing His Disciples who are on the point of setting out to announce the coming of the Kingdom ; and immediately after naming the sword He explains His words by means of familiar examples. 'For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. . . . For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.' The sword, then, does not mean war ; it is but a symbol of division. The sword cuts asunder, divides, disunites ; and the preaching of the Gospel will divide the members of the same household. For among men there are the deaf and those who hear, the slow-witted and the quick, those who believe and those who deny. Until all shall have been converted and reunited by the Word, so long shall discord reign on earth. But discord is not war and slaughter.

Those who have heard and believe—the Christians—will not attack those who do not listen, who do not believe. They will use arms against their rebellious and obstinate brethren, but these arms will be preaching, example, forgiveness and love. The unconverted will, perhaps, wage war, real war, the war of violence and of blood, but they will do this precisely because they are unconverted, because they are not yet Christians. The triumph of the Gospel is the end of all wars—of war between man and man, between one family and another, between one caste and another, between one people and another. If, at first, the Gospel be a cause of discord, the fault is not of the truths it teaches, but it is attributed to the fact that these truths are not yet practised by all.

When Jesus declares that He is come to bring only fire, a barbarian might think that He was alluding to the fire that kills, that is the worthy accomplice of war. '. . . and what will I, if it be already kindled ?' But the fire that the Son of Man desires is the ardour of sacrifice, the shining flame of love. So long as there are hearts that are not consumed by this flame, the words of the Gospel will remain but empty sound and the Kingdom will still be far removed. It will take a great fire of pain and passion to renew this corrupt human family. The cold must be made to burn, the unfeeling to groan aloud, the indifferent must flame forth like torches in the darkness. The impurity that man has accumulated in secret within himself, that makes every soul a sink of foulness, the corruption that stops the ears and stifles the heart, must be reduced to ashes by the spiritual fire that Jesus is come to kindle, that is not destruction but salvation.

Not all, however, possess the courage to pass through this wall of fire. Only the boldest will attempt to do so. Therefore Jesus is justified in saying that the violent take the Kingdom of Heaven by force. In the original text the word *violent* is manifestly used in the sense of *strong*, of men who are fearless, who know how to take a position by storm and without flinching. The sword, fire and violence are all words that are not to be taken in the literal

sense that the partisans of slaughter would attribute to them. They are figures we are obliged to use in order to make our meaning clear to the sluggish imagination of the masses. The sword symbolizes discord between the first to be convinced and the last; the fire is love that purifies; violence is the spiritual strength that is necessary to bring us to the threshold of the Kingdom. He who attributes another meaning to these words either cannot read or is deliberately disingenuous.

Jesus is the Man of Peace; He came to bring peace. The four Gospels proclaim and teach peace. On the very night of the Birth the heavenly choirs sang the prophetic salutation in the skies: 'On earth peace, good-will toward men!' One of the first promises which Jesus made, on the Mount, a promise that rose from His very heart, was that to the peacemakers: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.' When His Apostles were about to set out He commanded them to invoke the blessing of peace upon every house they should enter. He exhorts His Disciples and friends to live in concord. 'Have peace one with another.' On approaching Jerusalem, He looks upon the city and, weeping, exclaims: 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!' And on that night in the Garden of Olives, He pronounced His supreme condemnation of violence while the armed mercenaries were binding Him: 'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.'

He does not ignore the evils of discord. 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.' And in foretelling the last days He mentions, besides famine, earthquakes and tribulation, war as well among the signs of the end. 'And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars.'

Jesus regards discord as an evil and war as a crime. The apologists of great massacres are given to confounding the Old Testament with the New—which is New precisely because it reforms the Old.

War may be called divine when it is considered as a punishment, but it also punishes itself. War is the most cruel manifestation of the hatred that is ever secretly fermenting in the heart of man. Men give vent to the hatred that is within them by destroying one another with arms. War is at once a sin and its punishment. It is a sin because, even before the beginning of hostilities, it existed in the hearts of the contendents ; it is a punishment because the outburst of hatred leads to slaughter on both sides.

But were hatred banished from all hearts, war would become incomprehensible ; the most horrible of punishments would disappear with the most horrible of crimes. That day would dawn at last which Isaiah saw in his desire, wherein ' They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'

This day which Isaiah foresaw shall be that whereon the Sermon on the Mount will become the only recognized law on earth.

XLVI ONE FLESH

Jesus sanctifies the union between man and woman. So long as there shall be need of kings, He will render unto them the coins that bear their effigies ; until men shall have become like unto angels, the human species must multiply.

The family and the state, both imperfect institutions in comparison with the beatitude of heavenly conditions, will nevertheless remain indispensable so long as man waits on earth to be admitted into Paradise. But, this being the case, they should at least be rendered less impure and imperfect. He who governs should feel himself no better than he who serves ; the union between man and woman should be holy and eternal.

To Jesus matrimony is, above all else, the joining of two creatures. On this point He is at one with the Old Law. ' . . . And they shall be one flesh.' Husband and

wife are one body, undetachable, inseparable. The man may have no other woman, the woman may know no other man until death divides them. The coming together of man and woman, when it is neither adulterous intercourse nor an act of passing lust, when it is the meeting and merging of two healthy, chaste beings, when it has been preceded by free choice, by a pure passion, by a public act of consecration, is surrounded by an aura of mysticism that nothing can dispel. The choice is irrevocable, the passion is confirmed, the bond is everlasting. Two bodies, united by desire, two souls that know and complete each other in love, become one flesh and one soul.

Of this communion a new being will be born, the essence of both—the visible symbol of their oneness. Love has made them like unto God insomuch as they are become labourers in the eternally new and miraculous work of creating.

But this oneness of two that is both carnal and spiritual —the least imperfect of human associations—must never suffer suspension. Adultery corrupts it, divorce severs it. Adultery is the insidious corroding of this state or oneness; divorce is its definite abolition. Adultery is a secret divorce founded upon lies and betrayal; divorce followed by a new marriage is adultery legalized.

Jesus never failed to condemn adultery and divorce, and this solemnly and absolutely. His whole nature recoiled from unfaithfulness and betrayal. A time will come, He once declared while speaking of heavenly life, when men and women will no longer marry; but until that time the state of matrimony must at least be maintained as perfect as its imperfect nature will allow it to be. And Jesus, who always reasons from outward results to inner causes, calls not only him an adulterer who takes away his brother's wife, but him also who looks upon her with the eyes of desire. Nor is he only an adulterer who has secret intercourses with the wife of another, but he also who, having repudiated his own wife, married a second. There is one passage, indeed, wherein Jesus appears to admit the right a husband has to divorce an unfaithful wife, but the guilty

woman's crime could never justify the crime the husband would commit were he to take another wife.

Confronted with a law so absolute and severe, even the Disciples demurred, and said : ' If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But He said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb ; and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men ; and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.'

Matrimony is a concession to human nature and to the propagation of life. ' All men cannot receive this saying ' —they cannot all remain chaste, in a state of virginity, and alone—' save them to whom it is given.' Perfect celibacy is a grace bestowed on some as a reward for the victory of the spirit over the flesh.

Whosoever would devote himself entirely to a great work must condemn himself to chastity. No one can serve both humanity and a single individual. The man who has a difficult mission to accomplish, which demands all his time down to the last hour, may not tie himself to a woman. Marriage implies the dedication of self to another being, but he who would be a Saviour must dedicate himself to all humanity. The union of two souls is not sufficient for him, and it would but render more difficult, perhaps even impossible, a union with all other souls. The responsibilities incurred by the choice of a wife, the bringing of children into the world, the creating of a small community of men, are so heavy as to form a daily impediment to the fulfilment of far more serious obligations.

The man who would lead and change others may not tie himself for life to any one being. He would either be unfaithful to his wife or to his mission. His sense of universal brotherhood is too strong to allow him to love one of his sisters only. A hero is a solitary being ever. Solitude is at once his penalty and his greatness. He renounces the joys of marital affection indeed, but the

love that is in him is multiplied infinitely and he communicates it to all men in a sublimation of sacrifice that surpasses all earthly ecstasy. The man who has no woman is lonely but free; his soul, that is not weighted with common and material considerations, can soar the higher. He begets no children according to the flesh, but through him the children of his spirit are reborn to a second life.

It is not given to all, however, to lead a life of abstinence, '. . . save they to whom it is given.' The work involved in the founding of the Kingdom calls for men who can give their whole souls to it; the work of the flesh, even when confined within the legitimate bounds of matrimony, weakens the powers of him who has spiritual work to accomplish.

Those who shall rise from the dead on the great day of triumph will never again be tempted. In the Kingdom of Heaven the bodily union between man and woman, even though sanctified by the perpetuity of marriage, will be abolished. Its main purpose is the creation of new beings, but in that day death will have been conquered, and the renewal of the generations will no longer be necessary. 'The children of this world marry and are given in marriage; but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.'

When we shall have attained to eternal life and to the state of angels—when Christ's two promises and two certitudes shall have been fulfilled—that which once was bearable will become insufferable, what once seemed pure will seem unclean, what we once regarded as sacred will appear imperfect. Before reaching that highest state mankind will have passed through all the stages of his trial. The possession of the female he had taken by force sufficed for primitive man; later, man attained to a higher level and established matrimony—one union with one woman; the saint rose higher still and reached voluntary chastity.

But when man shall have become an angel in heaven, when he shall be all spirit and love, and shall have conquered even the memory of the flesh, his love, in a world where there are no poor, no sick, no unhappy beings, and where enmity is unknown, will have been transformed by the contemplation of what is superhuman.

The cycle of births is closed. The fourth kingdom is established for all eternity. Its citizens will be the same always, those same and no others throughout the centuries. The curse of painful child-bearing will have been removed from woman; the sentence of banishment revoked; the serpent crushed; the Father, rejoicing, welcomes the return of the son who had fled from home. Paradise is regained never again to be lost.

XLVII FATHERS AND SONS

Jesus was teaching in the house of friends, perhaps at Capernaum; and men and women, all who were hungry for life and justice, all who were in need of refreshment and consolation, had filled the room and were pressing close to Him and gazing upon Him as one may gaze upon a father who had been long absent, upon a beloved brother, upon a benefactor. These men and women were so hungry for His word that they had left Jesus and His friends no time to eat a morsel since their arrival. He had been talking a long time, and still they would have Him continue, continue until evening, without pause, without resting for an instant. For this moment thousands of their forebears had waited in abject misery and with brutish resignation. They themselves had been waiting over long in the gloom of confused, nostalgic wretchedness. All had been longing, throughout the darkness, for a ray of light, a promise of happiness, a word of love. And now, after their long term of waiting, He stood before them who would reward their patience. They would wait no longer, however. Those men and women stood before Jesus like privileged and impatient creditors, into whose hands the Divine Debtor, for whose coming they had waited eternally, was fallen at

last; and each would now receive his share down to the last mite. He could well abstain from bread for a while—their fathers had long gone without the bread of truth, and for years they themselves had not been able to still their cravings with the bread of hope.

Jesus, therefore, continued to instruct those who had crowded around Him, drawing for them the most touching pictures His inspiration suggested, telling of the Kingdom in the most convincing language, and gazing upon them the while with those beseeching eyes of His that searched the deepest recesses of the heart, as the morning sun searches the darkness of a closed house. We would all of us give the rest of our lives to have those eyes rest upon us, to gaze but for an instant into those depths shining with infinite tenderness, to listen but once to that gentle voice that changes the Semitic tongue into the sweetest music. Those men and women who were poor, who are long since dead, those miserable creatures who to-day are dust in the desert or mud beneath the camels' hoofs, whom no one envied while yet they lived, but whom we, who are alive, are come to envy, centuries after their obscure end—those men and women heard that voice and beheld those eyes.

There is a sudden commotion and whispering at the door! Some one wishes to enter, and one of those present informs Jesus, saying: 'Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother or my brethren? And he looked around about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.'

Hereby Jesus meant to say: 'My family is here. I have no other. Ties of blood are as naught when they are not confirmed in the spirit. My Father is He who makes Me like unto Himself in the perfection of goodness; My brothers are all poor, who have mourned; My sisters are all the women who have foregone many loves for Love's sake.' Jesus did not mean that He denied the Virgin of Dolours, of whose womb He was the fruit. He meant that,

from the time when He had gone forth into voluntary exile, He no longer belonged to the little family of Nazareth, but only to His mission of saving His great human family.

In the new economy of salvation spiritual affiliation overcomes and surpasses carnal affiliation. 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' Love for the individual must become subordinate to universal love. We must choose between the many affections of the old Adam and the one affection of the new man.

When, in the heavenly life, men shall have surpassed mankind in virtue, the family will disappear. At present it remains a hindrance to him who would help others to reach Paradise. 'Call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven.' He who forsakes his own people will receive a rich reward. 'Verily I say unto you, There is no man that has left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time . . . and in the world to come, eternal life.'

Of the Father who is in heaven man can be always sure; also of his brethren in the Kingdom; but his father and brethren here below on earth may even become his murderers. 'And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. . . .'

Fathers, at least, should be faithful to us; for, as Jesus teaches, a father's duty towards his son is greater than that of a son towards his father. The Old Law recognized only the filial obligation. 'Honour thy father and thy mother' was one of Moses' commandments, but he did not add: 'Protect and love thy children.' Children belonged to them who brought them into existence, and at that time life was esteemed a thing so precious and beautiful that children could never be able to repay the debt they owed their parents. They must remain their servants for all time, and remain eternally subject to the parental will.

They must live for their parents only and obey their wishes.

Here again the divine insight of the Subverter showed Him what the ancients lacked, and He therefore laid stress upon the other side. Fathers must give, must bestow freely and unceasingly. Even though the son be wicked, even though he forsake his father, even though, in the eyes of the worldly, he deserve nothing. Half of the Lord's Prayer is a petition any child, any son, may make to his earthly father.

Fathers, even those who bestow all, may yet be forsaken by their children. If these go from them to a life of evil-doing, they must be ready to forgive them when they shall return, as the Prodigal of the parable was forgiven. If a man's son forsake his home to lead a higher and more perfect life—as do those who are converted to the Kingdom—their reward shall be great, both in this life and in the next.

Fathers, in any case, are the debtors. They must acquit themselves of the tremendous responsibility they assumed when they gave life to a new being. Like the Father who is in heaven, they must give alike to those who ask and to those who keep silence, to the deserving and the unworthy, to those who sit at the family board, and to those who are wanderers upon the face of the earth; they must give to the good and to the wicked, to the first and to the last. They must never become impatient either with the children who are untrue to them, with those who sin against them, or with those who deny them.

'. . . or what man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?' Who, then, will refuse the supreme gift to the son who leaves him without demanding anything—the supreme gift of love that seeks nothing in return?

All are children of the Son of Man, but no one can call Him a Father according to the flesh. Perhaps the only joy that is not a delusion among all the delusive joys of man, is that which enables him to hold in his arms a little child whose face is rosy with the blood that flows in his own veins, whose eyes light up as he smiles at him, who lisps

his name, who reawakens all the tenderness of his youth ; to feel in contact with his own, that is roughened by exposure to the sun and wind, that velvety, new-born skin that seems still to hold somewhat of the mother's milk ; to touch that flesh that is like the warm and quivering petals of a flower, to feel that it is ours, moulded within the flesh of the woman who is our very own, and fed at her breast ; to watch the dawning and slow development of the soul that dwells in this flesh that belongs to us, and to her who is our own ; to be the father of this unique child, of this flower opening to the light of the world ; to see ourselves in him, to see our gaze reflected in his wondering eyes, to hear our own voice issuing from his fresh lips,—in a word, to become a child again in this child, that we may be worthy of him and draw closer to him ; to become better and purer, and to forget all the years that have been silently drawing us towards death ; to forget the pride of manhood, the vanity of learning, the first wrinkles upon our brow, all the obligations and stains, and all that is shameful in life, and renew our primal purity beside that sweet, tender and virgin infant ; to become serene again in the aura of that serenity ; to become good, better than we have ever been before ; to be, in short, the father of a little child, that is growing from day to day, in our home, in the arms of our own woman, is—without any 'perhaps'—the highest human happiness it is given man to experience.

Jesus, whom no man called father, was attracted to children as He was to sinners. Himself an absolute spirit, He loved only the extremes. Innocence and the fall were to Him guarantees of salvation. Innocence because it has no need of being cleansed ; baseness because it senses the need of purification more acutely. Those who stand midway are the beings who are in danger ; those who are half good, half evil ; the men who are inwardly corrupt but would fain appear spotless and righteous ; they who have lost their native purity with their youth and are as yet oblivious to the reek of their inner putrefaction.

Jesus loved children with a great tenderness and sinners with a great pity—loved the pure and those who must be

purified. He delighted in stroking the child's soft locks, and He did not shrink from the contact with the perfumed tresses of the harlot. He went forth to meet sinners because they did not always possess the strength to come to Him, but He called little children to His side, for children recognize instinctively one who loves them, and to him they run gladly.

Mothers held out their infants to Him that He might touch them; the Disciples, ever roughly officious, chided them, but Jesus rebuked them, saying: 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.'

The long-bearded Disciples, proud of their authority and of their position as the future Lord's lieutenants, could not understand why their Master should waste His time with children, who had not yet learned to speak distinctly and were unable to understand His words. But Jesus, placing a little child in their midst, said to them: 'Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.'

Here again the subversion of values is complete. According to the Old Law it was the child who must respect the man, venerate the old and imitate them in all things. The little one must take the grown man for a model. Perfection dwelt in the mature or rather in the aged. The child was deserving of consideration only because of the promise of his future manhood. Jesus reversed the rôles. Adults must take children for their models; the aged must strive to become once more as babes; fathers must imitate their sons. In a world where force counted for so much, where

only the art of money-making and of outdoing one's neighbours was esteemed, children were looked upon as little better than common larvæ. But in the new world Christ was come to foretell, where confiding purity and the loving tenderness of innocence reigned supreme, children were the prototype of happy citizenship. The child who had heretofore been considered but as a still imperfect man, is, in reality, more perfect than any man. The man who believes he has achieved the fullness of his manhood and of his soul's development must retrace his steps, strip himself of his complacent self-sufficiency, and become a child again. From being the model, he must become the imitator ; from the first place, he must descend to the last.

Jesus Himself was only too willing to proclaim His own childishness, and was never ashamed to declare His identity with the children who flocked around Him. 'Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me.' The Saint, the Pauper, the Poet presents Himself in this new shape, which symbolizes His three states ; for the child is as pure and clean as the Saint, as naked and needy as the Pauper, as full of wonder and of love as the Poet.

Jesus did not love children merely as the unconscious models for those who aspire to achieve perfection, but because they are the true vehicles of truth. Their ignorance is more enlightening than the wisdom of the doctors : their simplicity is more powerful than the genius of him whose discourse is rich in weighty reasoning. Only a mirror that is unsullied can reflect revelation.

Once Jesus exclaimed : 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' The wise are befogged by their own wisdom because they think that they know all things ; the intelligent are handicapped by their own intelligence because they can see no other light than that of the intellect. Only the simple understand simplicity ; the innocent, innocence ; the loving, love. The revelation of Jesus, that is open only to virgin souls, consists entirely of humility,

purification and mercy. But as man grows older he becomes corrupt and proud; and learns the awful satisfaction of hate. Day by day he lengthens the distance that separates him from Paradise, and becomes less and less capable of regaining it. He delights in his gradual descent, glories in useless erudition that does but conceal from him the only truth it is necessary to know.

In order to regain the new Paradise, the kingdom of love and innocence, we must again become like children who, by a privilege of birth, are already what it will cost others much labour to become.

Jesus, indeed, seeks the society of men and women and even of sinners, but He feels that He is in the company of His true brethren only when His hands touch the downy heads of the babes the mothers of Galilee hold out to Him that He may bless them.

XLVIII MARTHA AND MARY

Women loved Jesus devotedly. This Being in the shape and the flesh of a man was encompassed throughout His whole life, and even after His death, by a warm aura of feminine tenderness. This virgin Wanderer was beloved of women as no one has ever been, and will ever be. This chaste Being who condemned adultery and incest possessed in their eyes the irresistible fascination of innocence.

Before one who does not kneel to them, women bend the knee. The husband with all his legal authority and affection, the libertine who pursues, the glib-tongued tempter, and the bold ravisher, have less power over a woman's sentiments than has he who loves her without touching her, who saves her from herself without claiming so much as a kiss as his reward. Woman who is the slave of her body, of her weakness, of her own desires and of those of the male, is attracted by one who loves her without asking for more than a glass of water, a smile, a few moments of quiet attention.

Women loved Jesus. They would stop when they saw Him pass, follow Him when He was walking with His

friends, draw near to a house He had entered, bring their children to Him, call down blessings upon Him, touch His garments for the healing of their infirmities, and were ever eager to serve Him. All women might have cried aloud with her who lifted up her voice in the midst of a multitude, saying : ' Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked ! '

Many women followed Him when He went to His death. There were Salome, mother of the Sons of Thunder, Mary the wife of Cleophas and mother of James the Less, Martha and Mary of Bethany.

They would have been glad to be His sisters, His handmaidens or His slaves ; to wait upon Him, prepare His food, pour His wine, wash His garments, and anoint His tired feet and long, flowing hair. Some among them had the happiness to follow Him, and the still greater happiness of helping Him with their worldly possessions. ' . . . and the twelve were with him, and certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.' Women, in whom piety is an inborn gift of the heart before reaching the desire to achieve perfection, were then, as they have always been, more generous than men.

When Jesus appeared in the house of Lazarus two women, the sisters of him who had been raised from the dead, were beside themselves with joy. Martha hastened forth to meet Him, inquiring what she could do for Him, whether He would like to bathe, or whether He would eat at once. And having brought Him into the house she led Him to the couch that He might rest, and brought a coverlet in case He should be cold, and hurried to the well for fresh, cool water. Returning to the house she quickly set about preparing a tempting repast for the pilgrim, a meal more elaborate than the family usually enjoyed. In haste she kindled a fire, went out in search of fresh fish and newly-laid eggs, and to gather figs and olives ; from one neighbour she obtains a piece of lamb that had been killed

the day before; from another she borrows some rare perfume; a third, richer than herself, contributed a bowl containing flowers to deck the board. From the chest she took her finest cloth, from the cellar she brought the oldest wine; and while the wood crackled and the sparks flew in the chimney-place, poor Martha, perspiring, flushed and bustling, laid the table, hastening back and forth between the fire and the cupboard, pausing only from time to time to look out of the window to see if her brother were in sight, or to glance at her sister, who was doing nothing to help. Since the moment Jesus had crossed the threshold indeed, Mary had been in a state of motionless ecstasy out of which no one could arouse her. She had eyes for Him alone, heard His voice only. In that hour no one but Jesus existed for her. She was never tired of looking upon His face, of listening to His words, of feeling His loving presence close to her. When He returned her gaze, she rejoiced; when He was not looking at her she kept her eyes fixed upon Him; when He spoke, His words sank into her heart, one by one, to be cherished there until her death; and when He was not speaking, she felt His silence to be a still more direct revelation. Her sister's bustling and the noise of her footsteps troubled Mary. Does Jesus want a grand supper, then? She had seated herself at His feet, nor would she move even though Martha or Lazarus himself should summon her. She also was serving Jesus, but in a different way. She had given Him her soul, her whole loving soul; and to labour for Him with her hands would have been unfitting and of no avail. Hers was a contemplative, an adoring soul. She would stir only when the time came to sprinkle perfumes upon the body of her God; she would respond, indeed, should He demand of her her life, that she shed her blood for Him. But everything else, all these preparations her sister was making, were but material things that were as naught to her.

The women loved Him, and in exchange for this love of theirs He gave them pity. No woman who appealed to Him was ever sent away with her sorro unrelieved. The

tears of the widow of Nain affected Him so deeply that He raised her son from the dead ; the prayers of the woman of Canaan, although she was a stranger, moved Him to heal her daughter ; the woman ' which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself,' was healed, although it was on the Sabbath day, and the rulers of the synagogue cried aloud that He was committing sacrilege. In the early days of His wanderings He had cured Peter's wife's mother of a fever, and driven the evil spirits out of Mary Magdalene, raised the daughter of Jairus and healed an unknown woman who was afflicted with an issue of blood.

The doctors of His day held woman to be of little account in spiritual matters. They tolerated her presence at religious feasts, but would never have dreamed of imparting to her the great, secret mysteries. A rabbinical proverb of that epoch says : ' Better to burn them, than to teach the words of the Law to a woman.' But Jesus deigned to instruct women concerning the highest of mysteries. While sheltering from the sun beside the well at Sychar, there came to Him that woman of Samaria who had five husbands, and He did not hesitate to impart the truths of His mission to her, although she was both a woman and an enemy of His own people. ' But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit ; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.'

When His Disciples arrived, however, they failed to understand what the Master was about, ' and marvelled that he talked with a woman.' They did not yet know that the Church of Christ would place a Woman as mediatrix between the children and the Son of God—she who, alone among women, unites in herself the two most perfect attributes of womanhood—the Virgin Mother who suffered one long martyrdom on our behalf from the night at Bethlehem until the night of Golgotha.

XLIX THE WRITING ON THE GROUND

Once, at Jerusalem, Jesus found Himself in the presence of a woman taken in adultery. A howling crowd had dragged her before Him, and she stood convicted, hiding her face in her hands and unbound hair. Jesus had preached the perfect oneness of husband and wife and He abhorred adultery ; but His abhorrence of cowardly spies, of the violence of merciless men, of the impudence of sinners who would set themselves up as judges, was greater still. Jesus could not absolve this woman who had broken the law of God in a manner so loathsome, but neither would He condemn her, for He knew that these her accusers had no right to demand her death. And so, stooping down, He wrote with the tip of His finger in the dust. It is the first and the last time we find Jesus humiliating Himself to perform this act of mortification. No one has ever known what He wrote in the presence of that woman who stood before Him quivering in her shame, like a deer that has been overtaken by a pack of fierce hounds. He chose to write in the dust that the wind might quickly obliterate words that men, perhaps, could not have read without trembling. The woman's shameless persecutors, however, would not desist, but demanded that the adulteress be stoned to death. Then Jesus ' lifted up himself,' and looking from one to the other, and searching their very souls, He said : ' He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.'

We are all, in a body, guilty of our brothers' sins. From the highest to the lowest we are the necessary and daily accomplices of sin, although we all too often escape punishment. The adulteress would not have been unfaithful had men not tempted her, had her husband known better how to hold her affection ; the thief would not steal were the rich less hard-hearted ; the murderer would not kill were he not first exasperated by ill-usage ; did men control their evil passions there would be no harlots. The guiltless alone have the right to judge others. But on earth there are no

guiltless, and were there any, their pity would outweigh their sense of justice.

The merciless accusers of this wretched woman had never entertained any such thoughts as these, but they were, nevertheless, troubled by the words of Jesus. Each was reminded of his own shortcomings, of his own misdeeds which were perhaps of recent date. The soul of each was as a drain which, when the stone that covers its mouth is removed, sends forth a nauseous stench. The oldest were the first to turn away, and after them, one by one, the others took their departure, each ashamed to meet another's glance. The square was soon empty, and again Jesus stooped and wrote upon the ground. The woman had heard the shuffling footsteps of the retreating men and had become aware that their clamouring for her death had ceased, but she lacked the courage to raise her eyes, for she knew that One still remained—the Man without Sin—the only One who might have had the right to cast a stone at her. For the second time Jesus 'lifted up himself,' and seeing that all were departed, He said to the woman :—

'Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?'

And she answered : 'No man, Lord.'

Then said Jesus : 'Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.'

Then, for the first time, the woman had the courage to look her Saviour in the face. She had but a bare inkling of the meaning of His words. Her sin was a sin in His eyes also, for had He not enjoined upon her to sin no more? Yet He had saved her from those others. Who was this man, so different from all the rest, who forgave the sinner while He abhorred the sin? She longed to question Him, to show her gratitude, at least to requite Him with a smile, for although her spirit was weak, her mouth was beautiful. But once more Jesus had stooped to write in the dust. His head was bowed and she could see only the soft waves of His hair shining in the sun and His finger moving slowly in the glistening sand.

L THE WOMAN WHICH WAS A SINNER

No woman loved Jesus as did that sinful one who anointed His feet with oil of nard and bathed them with her tears in the house of Simon.

Each one of us may picture the scene for himself. The figure of the weeping woman with her hair flung forward and covering the Wayfarer's feet has its place in the minds of all. But the true significance of the episode is clear to a few only, so grievously has it been distorted by vulgar interpretations. The decadents of the last century, those past-masters in all the refinements of sensualism, who sought corruption as flies or crows seek rotting flesh, searched the Gospels for all those women who had about them the odour of sin, or who in any way resembled those females who came to them in dreams to exasperate their impotence. It was thus that the unknown penitent called Mary of Magdala, the obscure adulteress of Jerusalem, Salome the dancer, and the evil Herodias became their prey, and were dressed up by them in gala robes of velvety adjectives, swathed in the shimmer of silky substantives and tricked out in the gems and gold of metaphor.

The sinful woman who so quietly entered the house of Simon with her alabaster box of ointment was no longer a sinner. She had already seen and acknowledged Jesus. Nor was she any longer the prostitute—mere flesh for the satisfying of the desires of man. She had already heard the voice of Jesus, and listened to His words. That voice had troubled her and those words brought her conversion about. She who once belonged to all men had learned that there is a love more beautiful than passion, a poverty richer than any wealth that can be counted in shekels and talents. When she entered Simon's house she was no longer the woman she once had been, the woman whom one man pointed out to another, with a laugh, whom the Pharisee knew and despised. Her whole soul was altered, her whole life changed. Her flesh was become pure, her hand clean ; her lips no longer knew the taste of carmine, and her eyes had learned to weep. In accordance with

the promise of the King, she was now ready to enter the Kingdom.

Without this premise it is impossible to comprehend the story that follows. The woman who has been rescued from a life of sin wishes to requite her Saviour by some act of gratitude. She therefore takes one of the few precious things she still possesses, a sealed box full of nard, the gift, perhaps, of some chance lover, and goes forth, determined to anoint the head of her King with this rare perfume.

Her first thought, then, is one of gratitude; her act is one of public thanksgiving. The 'woman which was a sinner' wishes to thank Him who has cleansed her soul, who has lifted her out of her shame, has called her heart back to life and inspired her with a hope that surpasses all joy.

As timid and shy as a child entering the schoolroom for the first time, or as one who has just been pardoned stepping forth from his prison-cell, she enters Simon's house, her box of ointment clasped to her breast. Silently she comes and lifts her eyes but for a moment to see where Jesus lies. With shaking limbs she approaches His couch; her hands tremble and her long lashes quiver, for she is aware that the eyes of all are upon her, are following every graceful movement of her lovely form, and that all are wondering what her purpose may be.

She breaks the seals of the small alabaster flask and pours half of its contents upon Jesus' head. The large, heavy drops sparkle upon His hair like liquid gems. With loving hands she distributes the clear ointment over His flowing locks, nor does she desist until His whole head is anointed and His hair is become soft and bright. The room is flooded with fragrance and all eyes are fixed upon her in amazement.

Then, still in silence, the woman takes her jar and goes to kneel at the feet of the Messenger of Peace. She pours the rest of the oil upon her palm and slowly anoints first one foot and then the other, her touch as tender as that of a young mother bathing her first-born for the first time. But presently her feelings overcome her, and she can no longer prevent the outburst of a flood of tenderness that is a very spasm, that strains her heart, clutches at her

throat and fills her eyes with tears. She would fain speak and tell them all that hers is an act of thanksgiving, of simple, pure, and heartfelt gratitude for the grace she has received, for the new light that has been shed upon her, But how, at this moment, and in the presence of these men. can she find the right words, words capable of expressing the immensity of the blessing that has been conferred upon her, words fit for Him to hear ? Besides, her lips are trembling so that it would be impossible for her to utter the syllables ; she would but stammer and sob. And so, unable to express herself with her lips, she lets her eyes speak for her, and one by one the great tears roll down her face and fall, fast and burning, upon the feet of Jesus—as many silent offerings of pure gratitude. These tears relieve her bursting heart and ease her pain ; she sees nothing, feels nothing but an ineffable sense of happiness such as she has never known either in childhood on her mother's breast or in the arms of men, that courses through her veins makes her tremble and turn faint, becomes akin to agony in its intensity, dissolves her whole being in one supreme ecstasy wherein joy is suffering and pain is rejoicing, wherein pain and joy are blended in one tremendous whole.

Her tears are of repentance for her former life, for her miserable life of yesterday ; but they are tears of joy and of relief as well. She weeps not only at the thought of her shame, that is now removed from her, but also because of the ineffable sweetness of the life upon which she is entering. She weeps at thought of her reacquired chastity, of her soul snatched from the clutches of evil, of the purity that has been miraculously restored to her, of the death sentence that has been repealed for all time, cancelled for all eternity. Her tears are those of happiness at her rebirth, of exultation at the discovery of truth, of delight in sudden conversion, in the regaining of her soul that had seemed lost, in the marvellous hope that has lifted her out of material impurity and raised her to spiritual enlightenment. Each drop of nard and every one of her tears is a thankoffering for immeasurable grace received.

Yet it is not for herself alone that she weeps, not for her

own pain only and her own happiness. The tears that rain upon the feet of Jesus are for Him also.

This woman has anointed her King as the kings of old were anointed. She has anointed his head as the high priests and the monarchs of Judea were anointed; she has anointed His feet as the feet of guests and of the rich are anointed on festive occasions. But at the same time this weeping woman has been preparing Him for death and the sepulchre. Jesus, who is soon to enter Jerusalem, is aware that these days are the last of His life in the flesh. 'For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial,' Jesus told His Disciples. While He yet lived, a woman's piety had embalmed Him.

Before His death, however, Christ will receive yet another baptism, that of infamy, of supreme offence—the soldiers of the Prætorium will spit upon Him. Meanwhile He has received at the same time the baptism of glory and that of death; He is anointed as the King who shall triumph in the heavenly Kingdom and perfumed as the body that shall be laid within the cave. This symbol of anointing unites the twin mysteries of the Messiahship and of the Crucifixion.

The poor, sinful woman who was singled out to perform this prophetic rite had perhaps some vague presentiment of the awful significance of this anticipatory embalming. The prescience of love, which is stronger in woman than in man, the premonitory power which deep and tender emotion possesses, must have warned her that this body she had perfumed and caressed would soon be but a cold and bloodstained corpse. Other women, perhaps she herself among them, would go to the sepulchre to bathe His body once more in sweet perfumes, but they would not find it. He who to-day sits at meat with His friends will then be standing at the gate of another hell.

And so the weeping woman continues to shed her tears upon the feet of Jesus, amidst the stupefaction of all present, who do not know, who cannot understand. And the feet of the Liberator, of Him who is doomed to die, are wet with her tears, that mingle with the sweet-smelling

nard. The poor repentant soul knows not wherewith to dry those feet whereon her eyes have shed their sorrow. She has no napkin of fine linen, and her robe is all unworthy to touch the flesh of her Lord ; but suddenly she remembers her hair, her long, beautiful hair that has been so much admired for its fineness and silkiness. Quickly she loosens her braids, and removes pins and combs ; and the blue-black mass falls about her face, covering alike her shame and her sorrow. With handfuls of these flowing tresses she slowly dries the feet that have borne her King to this house.

Now she has ceased to weep. All her tears are shed and dried. She has performed her mission, and Jesus alone has understood her silence.

LI FOR SHE LOVED MUCH

Of all who were present at that supper Jesus alone had comprehended the nature of the loving service the unnamed woman had rendered, but no one spoke ; they merely stared as had their astonishment deprived them of the power of speech. Although they did not understand its significance, they were nevertheless filled with a sense of vague respect for the solemn and mysterious rite—all save two, who chose to see an insult to the guest in that woman's action. These two were the Pharisee and Judas Iscariot. The Pharisee said nothing, but his eyes spoke more plainly than his lips could have done. The traitor, taking advantage of his intimacy with the Master, had the courage to speak.

Simon said to himself : ' This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him ; for she is a sinner.'

Both those who have associated much with her and those who have never known her hate the harlot, and so it was with this old hypocrite. Like his brethren, he belonged to the vast cemetery of whited sepulchres that within are full of foulness. It was enough for them to avoid outward contact with what they deemed impure, even though their

souls be sullied. Their moral code was a system of ablutions and rinsings. They would leave one who was wounded to die by the roadside that they might not stain their hands with blood. They would let a beggar starve to avoid touching money on the Sabbath. Like other men, they committed theft, adultery and murder, but so often did they wash them every day that they believed their hands to be as pure as those of a new-born babe.

This Pharisee had read the Law, and his ears still rang with the execrations and anathema which the Israel of his fathers had poured out against the harlot. 'There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel. . . . Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow; for even both these are abominations unto the Lord thy God.' And Simon, the model citizen, recalled with equal satisfaction the warning of the author of Proverbs: 'For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread. . . . For a whore is a deep ditch.' If only they did not cost so dear, but the shameless hussies were capable of eating up a fortune. To the prosperous old man the thought was intolerable that one of these dangerous creatures should have crossed his threshold and laid her hands upon his guest. He knew well enough that Rahab the harlot had given victory to Joshua and been the only one spared when Jericho was destroyed; but he also knew that the invincible Samson, the terror of the Philistines, had been undone by an evil woman. This Pharisee could not understand how one whom the people call a prophet could have failed to realize what manner of woman this is who was come to do Him an honour which dishonours Him. But as Jesus had read the heart of the sinner, so also He read Simon's heart, and He answered him with the parable of the Two Debtors:—

'There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he

forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet ; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss ; but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint ; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her ; for she loved much ; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.'

The parable and Jesus' comment show us how completely this episode is misunderstood even to-day. The only words that most of us remember are these : ' Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her ; for she loved much.' A careful examination of the text will convince us that the common and vulgar meaning attached to it is the very opposite of its true significance. It is commonly believed that Jesus forgave her sins because her love for men had been great, or because she had manifested her love for Himself by her kisses and her offering of nard. The example of the Two Debtors, however, shows us that the meaning of Jesus' words—which have been carelessly chronicled and wrongly interpreted—is precisely the contrary. The woman had sinned grievously, but, by reason of her conversion, much was forgiven her, and because much was forgiven her, her love was great for Him who had converted her, saved her, pardoned her ; the nard and her tears and kisses are but the expression of her grateful love. Had the sinful woman not undergone a change before entering the house, were she not already become another, had she not already been transformed by the pardon granted her, not all the perfumes of India and Egypt, and all the kisses her lips could bestow, and all the tears her eyes could shed, would have sufficed to obtain from Jesus forgiveness for her past evil life. His pardon is not a recompense for her acts of homage ; rather are these acts the expression of her gratitude for the pardon

obtained, and they are great because great was the pardon, as the pardon was great because great had been her sins.

Jesus would not have rebuked the sinful woman even had she still been such, but He would probably not have accepted these proofs of her love had He not been sure of the transformation that had taken place within her heart; now He could speak to her, and this without offence against the precepts of Pharisaical rigorism. 'Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.'

Simon is silenced, but from the midst of the Disciples a cackling, complaining voice is suddenly raised, a voice that has long been familiar to Jesus' ears. 'To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.' And the Evangelists tell us that the other Disciples approved of Judas' words, and were indignant with the woman.

Judas kept the bag; the most infamous of all mankind chose to handle what is most infamous—money. Judas loved money. He loved it for itself and also as representing power. Judas prates of the poor, but he is not thinking of them to whom Jesus distributed bread in the desert place, but of his own companions, who are still too poor to conquer Jerusalem and found the Messianic kingdom, whereof Judas hopes to be one of the rulers. Besides being miserly he is also envious, as are all misers. That silent ceremony of anointing that suggests the consecration of the King, of the Messiah, and the homage a beautiful woman has paid to his Chief, are painful to him; the eternal jealousy one man feels towards another when in the presence of a woman mingles with his sense of insatiable greed.

Jesus, however, is ready to answer Judas as He had answered Simon. He does not rebuke the offenders, but defends the woman lying at His feet: 'Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole

world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.'

Probably the ineffable sadness of this prophecy escaped those who were seated at table with Him. They could not believe as yet that in order to conquer and to triumph eternally, Jesus must be defeated and die. But Jesus felt the approach of the hour. '. . . but me ye have not always. . . . She did it for my burial. . . .' With terror the woman heard her forebodings confirmed, another rush of tears blinded her eyes. Then, hiding her face in her flowing hair, she passed out in silence as in silence she was come in.

The Disciples held their peace; they were not convinced, but confounded. That the mortification to which he had been subjected might be forgotten, Simon ordered the best wine to be brought up for his guests. They filled their glasses, but, in the dim light, the silent assembly was become as a banquet of ghosts overshadowed by the wings of death.

LII WHO AM I?

Yet the Disciples must have known. Those words concerning His death were not the first they had heard.

They must have recalled that day when, as they were travelling along the lovely road in Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus had asked them what men said of Him. They must have remembered the reply that had burst like a sudden flame, like an irrepressible cry of faith from the very depths of Peter's soul; and the splendour that had dazzled three of them on the mountain-top; and Christ's prophecies concerning the shame of His end.

They had heard and seen these things, but yet they hoped—all save one. Truth would shine within them, at times, for a brief instant, like a flash of light in the dark, but immediately night would again fall upon them, darker than before. The new man who recognized the Christ in Jesus, the man born a second time, the Christian, would disappear, and his place be usurped by the deaf and shortsighted Jew, who could not see beyond a Jerusalem of brick and stone.

The question Jesus had asked of the Twelve on that day

in Cæsarea should have marked the beginning of their complete conversion to the new truth. What need could He have of wishing to know what others thought of Him? Such curiosity is only of the unstable, who know not themselves, of the weak who are incapable of reading their own hearts, of the blind who are not sure of the ground whereon they walk. Such a question would appear natural enough coming from any one of us, but not from Him. For no one of us really knows himself; no one is perfectly acquainted with his own nature, his own mission, the name he is entitled to bear—that eternal name which is so intimately associated with our destiny, our name in the Absolute. The name that is conferred upon us before we are able to speak, together with the salt and the water of baptism, the name that is inscribed in the official records, by which our mother called us tenderly of a morning, and by which our lover calls us in the night, the name that is carved at last upon the stone of our burial-place, is not our true name. Each one of us has a hidden name which expresses our invisible and authentic essence, and which we shall never hear until the day of the new birth, until we stand in the full light of the Resurrection.

Few have the courage to ask themselves: 'Who am I?' And fewer still are they who can answer. The question 'Who art thou?' is the gravest one man can put to another. To each one of us, all others are a closed mystery; but each one is a mystery to himself also. We live unknown among the unknown. Much of our suffering is the result of this universal ignorance. He who acts as a king and believes himself to be a king, in the Absolute is but a poor servant, predestined from the beginning of time to serve in an inferior capacity. That other being who wears the robes and performs the functions of a judge—observe him closely—he was born a mere pedlar, and his place is at the fair. And that other who writes poetry—he has failed to understand the inner voice that prompted him to become a goldsmith, for he loves the gold that may be made into coins, and is attracted by filigree chisellings, mosaics and false gems. And the man they have placed at the head of

an army—he should have been kept at his books. What a clever and eloquent professor he would have made! And the individual who shakes his unkempt mane and harangues in the market-place, inciting the people to revolt—he is really a gardener who has mistaken his calling. Red-skinned tomatoes, long lines of onions, fine heads of garlic and sound-hearted cabbages would have been the fitting fruits of his true mission. And on the other hand, this man who curses as he prunes his vines and spreads the dressing on the broken ground, should have studied the law and learned the art of eluding it, for there is no one so clever as he at inventing captious arguments and digging pitfalls; and how much eloquence he wastes, even as it is, in his humble and sordid wranglings, this poor prince of advocates relegated to the stable and the plough!

These mistakes are our lot because we do not know; because our spiritual eyesight is not strong enough to permit us to read in the heart that beats within us and in the hearts and bosoms of our kindred, who are so irremediably separated from us. Everything goes wrong on account of those names of which we are ignorant, which only genius knows.

But why should Jesus care to hear what the dwellers in the villages and on the lake-shore say of Him? Why should He ask, who can read the souls of men, read even those thoughts of which they themselves are unconscious? Jesus who, alone of all men, knew with a certainty that needed no corroboration, had long known indeed, what His true name was, and was well aware of His supernatural nature?

He did not ask, in fact, for information, but only that His followers themselves might be enlightened, that, now the end was approaching, they might know His real name. To the first reply He returned no answer. 'Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.' What are the ignorant speculations of the simple and of strangers to Him? He seeks a definite answer from these men themselves, who are destined to testify of Him among all peoples and

throughout the centuries. Down to the very end He would not coerce these men into believing ; these friends who lived in the closest intimacy with Him and who heard His voice daily. The Name which no one of them had as yet pronounced, as if they all feared it, must well up from the very soul of one of their number, like a declaration of love that cannot be suppressed, and fall, syllable by syllable, from his lips.

' But whom say ye that I am ? '

It was at this moment that Simon Peter's spirit was flooded with a light so dazzling as almost to overwhelm him, a light that made him henceforth and for ever the First, in very truth. The words that rushed to his lips he could no longer suppress, and with a conviction of which, but a moment before, he could not have believed himself capable, he cried : ' Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God ! . . . Thou hast the words of eternal life . . . and we have believed and recognized that thou art the Holy One of God.'

Out of the hard rock the fountain had burst forth at last that has slaked the thirst of sixty generations. It was his right and his reward. Peter had been the first to follow Jesus on His divine way ; it was for him to be the first to recognize in the wandering Herald of the Kingdom, the Messiah all had been expecting throughout the desolation of the centuries, and who was come at last, was the very Being who stood before him, his feet upon the dust of the roadway.

The Pure King, the Son of Justice, the Prince of Peace, whom the Almighty would send in His good time, whose advent the prophets had foretold amidst the gloom of tribulation and punishment, whom they had seen descending upon earth as a great light in the fullness of victory and of glory, was among them ; for Him the poor, the sick, the hungry, and those who had suffered injury had been longing from century to century as the parched fields long for the rain and the flower longs for the sun, as the lips long for the kiss and the heart for consolation ; the Son of God and of Man who hides God within His covering of flesh, the

God who has enveloped His divinity in Adam's clay, is He, the gentle Brother they have known day by day, is He who now stands calmly gazing into the wondering eyes of His chosen ones.

The time of waiting is over; the vigil is at an end. But why had they not recognized Him before? Why had they never told any one? When was the first suspicion born in those too simple souls of the true name of Him who had so often held them by the hand and whispered in their ear? Could they possibly have imagined that one of themselves—a common man, a labourer, one poor like themselves—could be the Messiah of salvation, whose coming the prophets had foretold and the peoples had long expected? Reason would not help them to discover this, nor the wisdom of all, nor even the words of Scripture, but only the divine inspiration that suddenly flooded their spirits with light. Thus it had been on that day with Peter. 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' Bodily eyes would not have been able to see what his had seen, without the help of divine revelation. But the fact that Peter was chosen to make this proclamation was to have its consequences. It was a promise which involved a reward. 'And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'

These are pregnant words out of which has come one of the mightiest kingdoms man has ever founded upon earth; the only one of the ancient kingdoms that still lives in the very city that witnessed the birth and the dissolution of the most splendid of all temporal kingdoms. For these words many suffered, many were tortured, many slain. In support or denial of these words, for the sake of their interpretation or obliteration, millions of men have gone to their death in the market-place or on the field of

battle; kingdoms have been divided, civilizations have been shaken and riven asunder, nations have revolted, emperors and beggars alike have been stirred. On the lips of Christ, however, their meaning is clear and simple. 'Thou, Peter, must stand firm and immovable as the rock; and upon the strength of thy faith in Me, which thou hast been the first to confess, will rest the first Christian association, the humble beginning of the Kingdom. Against this Church, which now has but twelve members but which is destined to spread even unto the ends of the earth, the powers of evil will never prevail, for thou art spirit, and spirit cannot be overcome and suffocated by matter. Thou shalt have power to close for ever the gates of hell, and to open the gates of heaven to all who are called; and when I speak to thee, I speak also to all who shall come after thee, united in the same faith. Thou shalt loose and bind in My name; that which thou shalt forbid after My death shall be forbidden to-morrow also, in the new humanity I shall find on my return; thy commands will be just commands, for thou wilt but repeat, even though it be in other words, that which I have taught thee and revealed unto thee. Both in thine own person and in the persons of thy legitimate successors thou shalt be the shepherd of the interregnum, the temporary and provisional guide, and with thy companions who shall be subject to thee, thou shalt prepare the Kingdom of God and of Love.'

In exchange for this revelation and this promise Christ demands a difficult proof of obedience—that of silence. 'To no one shall ye yet tell who I am. My day is near at hand but is not yet come.' 'And ye shall witness events ye do not expect, even the contrary of what ye expect. I know the hour wherein I shall speak, wherein ye also shall speak. And when we break silence My cry and yours will be heard throughout the earth and even in heaven itself.'

LIII SUNSHINE AND SNOW

Mount Hermon is very high, and has three peaks that are covered with snow even in the hot season. It is the

highest mountain in Palestine, higher even than Tabor. From Hermon comes the dew that descends on Zion, so the Psalmist sings. Upon this mountain, the highest in the life of Christ, wherein the heights are as landmarks—the mountain of the Temptation, the hill of the Beatitudes, the mount of the Transfiguration and that of the Crucifixion —Jesus became as a shining light. Three of the Disciples were with Him—the one He had surnamed Cephas and the Sons of Thunder—the Rock and the Tempest ; a company well appropriated to place and time. Jesus had gone apart to pray, had gone higher up than the others, and was perhaps kneeling on the snow. Who has not observed how all other whiteness appears grey in comparison with the winter snow on a mountain-side ? A pale face looks strangely dark, a linen cloth seems soiled, paper is the colour of dry clay. But on that day the very opposite happened on this white peak of Hermon that soars heavenward in its lonely grandeur.

As Jesus knelt here alone, His face suddenly shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as the sparkling snow, of a colour whiter even than that which a painter could imagine ; and upon the glistening surroundings there came a glory greater than any earthly light. The Transfiguration is the festival and the triumph of light. Destined still, but for so short a time, to remain flesh and matter, Jesus had assumed the thinnest, the lightest and most spiritual form of matter. While awaiting death to set it free, His body became as the light of the sun, of heaven itself, of the intellect, as supernatural light ; and His soul, transhumanized by prayer, became visible through the flesh, sending its brightness through the body and the garments He wore, as a great flame may consume enclosing walls and shine through them. The light, however, was not the same on His face as on His garments. That which shone from His face was as the light of the sun, whereas His garments shone with a brightness as of the snow. The face, which is the soul's mirror, was the colour of flame ; the garments, which are base matter, were the colour of ice. For the soul is sun, fire and love ; but the garments, all

of them, even that heaviest of all called the body, are opaque, cold and dead, and can shine only with a reflected light.

But Jesus is no longer alone, for two of the Great Dead, irradiated as is He Himself, draw near and speak with Him. These are Moses and Elias—the first Redeemer and the first Prophet. Men of light and of fire, they are come to testify to the new Light that shines on Hermon. All who have stood face to face with the Almighty have been encompassed and filled with light. When Moses came down from Sinai the skin of his face shone with a light so fierce that he was obliged to cover himself with a veil, that his followers might not be blinded. Elijah was taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot drawn by horses of fire. John, the new Elijah, proclaimed the baptism of fire, but his face, although bronzed by the sun, did not shine as the sun. The only splendour that was vouchsafed him was that of the golden charger that received his bleeding head—a royal offering to Herod's concubine.

But on Hermon stood One whose face outshone the face of Moses, whose ascension into heaven would be far more perfect than Elijah's. On Hermon He stood whom Moses had foretold, and who would come after Elias. His two great predecessors came and stood beside Him for a space, and then faded away for ever. After this final testimony they are no longer needed. The world can do without them, do without their laws and aspirations. A luminous cloud hides the three shining figures from the waiting Disciples, and out of the cloud comes a voice, crying: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.'

But instead of hiding the light behind it, the cloud does but enhance its brightness. As out of a dark sky during a storm comes the flash that illumines the whole landscape, so out of this cloud, already luminous in itself, there came upon the earth the flame that consumed the old covenant and confirmed the new promise for all eternity. The column of smoke that went before the Jews as they fled across the desert to the Jordan, the black cloud that filled the ark

and concealed it in times of danger and abomination, is now become a cloud so luminous as to conceal even the sunlike radiance of that face, destined soon to suffer cruel scourging in a time of darkness.

Presently the cloud rolled away and again Jesus stood alone. His two precursors and witnesses had vanished; His countenance had once more resumed its natural aspect; His robe was again the garment He always wore, and Christ, who was again their affectionate companion, spoke to His dazed Disciples, saying: 'Arise, and fear not. . . . Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.'

The Transfiguration is an adumbration of the Ascension; but to rise in glory it is necessary to die in shame.

LIV I MUST SUFFER MANY THINGS

Jesus had always known that He must die, die early and die a shameful death. This was the reward that awaited Him of which no one could deprive Him. He who would save is ready to lose Himself; He who redeems others must perforce pay with His whole being, that is to say, with the only treasure that is truly His, a treasure including and surpassing all others. It is but just that He who loves His enemies should be hated even by His friends; that He who brings salvation to all peoples should suffer death at the hands of His own people, and He who offers life deserves to die. A benefit conferred is so grave an offence to man's ingratitude that it can find expiation only in the greatest of all penalties. We listen only to the voices of the dead, and what slight amount of veneration we possess is bestowed upon those we have sacrificed. Man's faulty memory retains only the truths that have been written in blood.

Jesus knew what awaited Him at Jerusalem, and, as one said later who was worthy to describe Him, His every thought was stamped with the image of death. Three times already they had sought to kill Him. The first attempt had been made at Nazareth when they had led

Him to the top of the hill whereon the city stands and tried to push Him into a deep ravine. Then, in the Temple, the Jews, offended by words of His, had threatened to stone Him ; and again in the winter time, at the Feast of Dedication, they had silenced Him with stones.

Three times Jesus had narrowly escaped death, for His hour was not come ; but these promises of death He carried ever with Him, keeping them hidden in His heart until the time should be at hand. He would not sadden His Disciples, who might, indeed, have been shocked at the thought that they were the followers of One who was condemned, who already regarded Himself as a dying man. But after the threefold consecration of His Messiahship—by Peter's cry, by the light that shone on Hermon, and by the anointing at Bethany—He could no longer remain silent. He was too well aware of the illusion the Twelve cherished, too well aware that, save at rare moments of enthusiasm and illumination, they shared the hopes and beliefs of the majority of the Jews, and were but human even in their highest aspirations. He knew that they expected the Messiah to come as a victorious restorer of the golden age and not as the Man of sorrows. They thought of Him as of a king upon a throne, not as a malefactor on the scaffold ; as the victor surrounded by honours and trophies, not as one spat upon and scourged ; as one coming to raise the dead, and not as one to be done to death like a felon.

If a certainty too recently acquired were not to be shaken in the days of ignominy, they must be forewarned ; they must learn from the lips of the condemned Messiah Himself that the Messiah must be condemned, that the Victor must suffer ignominious defeat and must disappear ; that the King of all kings must bear insult from Cæsar's servants ; that the Son of God must be crucified by the blind servants of God.

Three times they had tried to kill Him, and three times, after Peter's acknowledgment, did He declare to His Disciples that the hour of His death was approaching ; and the men destined to issue the orders for His murder belonged to three different classes—elders, high priests and

scribes. Three also would be the accomplices necessary to carry out this crime—Judas who would betray Him, Caiaphas who would condemn Him, and Pilate who would ratify the sentence. Its actual executors would also be of three different orders—the 'captains of the temple' who would apprehend Him, the Jews assembled before the Prætorium who would shout 'Crucify Him!' and the Roman soldiers who would nail Him to the Cross.

His punishment, as He Himself told His Disciples, would be in three stages. First He would be mocked and insulted, then spat upon and scourged, and finally put to death. But they must neither fear nor weep, for as life finds its recompense in death, so is death the promise of a second life. After three days He would rise again from the grave, never more to die. Not with gold and corn in plenty does Christ reward those who obey His word, but with immortality and the remission of sins. But immortality and remission must be paid for with their opposites — with imprisonment and suffering. The price is high and the bargain a hard one, but those few days of the Passion and of burial are necessary that millions may obtain liberty and life.

These revelations troubled the Disciples, who were loath to credit them; but Jesus, dwelling in thought upon the events of those terrible last days, and speaking of them, had already begun to suffer. All had now been revealed to these heirs of His word, and Christ was free to set out for Jerusalem that the things He had foretold might be accomplished.

LV ANATHEMA

For a single day, however, Christ shall resemble the king for whose coming the poor waited daily at the gates of the holy city.

The feast of the Passover is nearing. The Last Week, which will never see an end (for the new Sabbath has not dawned as yet) was about to begin.

But not as He had entered it hitherto, as an obscure

wayfarer mingling with the throng of pilgrims, will Jesus now enter Jerusalem, the malodorous city, whose white-washed, tomb-like houses grovelled in the shadow of the arrogant Temple, itself destined to perish by fire. No, on this occasion, when He enters Jerusalem for the last time, Jesus is accompanied by His followers, His nearest, His fellow townsmen, by the women who will mourn for Him, by the Twelve who will hide, by the Galileans who are come to commemorate a miracle of ancient times, but also in the hope of witnessing a fresh miracle. This time, indeed, He is not alone ; the vanguard of the Kingdom is with Him. Nor does He come unknown, for the fame of His miracles has preceded Him. Even in the capital, where the sword of the Roman, the merchant's gold and the word of the Pharisee hold sway, there are eyes that strain towards the Mount of Olives and hearts that beat fast with awe.

This time He will not enter the city on foot—the city that should have been His kingdom's throne and that is destined instead to become His burial-place. Arrived at Bethphage, He had despatched two of His Disciples in search of an ass. They would find it tied to a hedge, He told them, and they must loose it and bring it to Him without waiting to crave permission from any one. Should the owner object, they were to say that the Lord needed it.

Even in our own day it has been frequently maintained that Jesus chose an ass to ride upon as a sign of His meekness and humility, thus proclaiming by a symbol that He was come to His people as the Prince of Peace. But the fact has been overlooked that, in earlier times, the ass was not the docile animal it is to-day, a thing of weary bones and a scarred hide, worn out by centuries of slavery and fit only to struggle up steep and rocky hillsides under its burden of sacks and baskets. The ass of olden times was a proud animal ; it was as handsome and dashing as the horse, and was deemed worthy to be offered in sacrifice to the gods. Homer, who was a master-hand at comparisons, certainly had no intention of derogating the proud and mighty Ajax when he likened him to an ass. The

Hebrews also made use of the wild ass for purposes of comparison. Thus Zophar the Naamathite tells Job that : ' Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt.' And Daniel tells us that when, as a punishment for his tyranny, Nebuchadnezzar was driven out from amongst men, his heart became like that of the beasts of the field and that he dwelt among wild asses.

Jesus asked expressly for an unbroken ass, one which had never before been ridden, a wild ass, in fact. For the animal He singled out on that day did not symbolize its rider's humility, but the children of Israel themselves, who shall first be set free and then tamed by Christ ; the stubborn, restive and stiff-necked beast, that no prophet and no monarch had ever tamed and that to-day is tied to a stake, as Israel is bound by the thongs of Rome. These vain men who would be wise, as the Book of Job says ; these fitting subjects for a king of most evil ways ; these slaves of the stranger who are at the same time rebellious and stubborn, these children of Israel have found their master at last. Only for one day, however ; for before the week is over they will have rebelled against Him, their legitimate Master. But their triumph over Him will be but short-lived ; for the riotous capital will be destroyed, the Temple overthrown, and the eternal Winnower will scatter the race of deicides like chaff throughout the earth.

The ass's back was so hard that His friends cast their garments upon it. The road was rough that led down from the Mount of Olives, and His exulting companions spread their mantles—which were those of the Sabbath day—upon the steep, ill-paved path. This also was an act of consecration. To remove one's cloak is to begin stripping oneself, and marks the beginning of that state of nakedness which is the desire to confess and the death of false pride. The nakedness of the body is the promise of nakedness of soul in truth ; it is love in supreme charity ; let us give even the clothes that cover us. ' . . . and him that taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also.'

And so, in the heat of the sun and the light of glory, did

Jesus begin His descent, while His followers waved freshly-cut branches and chanted hymns of praise and rejoicing.

It was early in April, the beginning of breezy spring. The golden noontide encompassed city and landscape, shedding its strength and vigour upon newly-awakened fields and gardens, and upon green vineyards. The sky, stretching away into the infinite, was marvellously clear—a vast sky of iris, as pure and joyous as were it God's own promise-laden glance. One could not see the stars, but it seemed as if the quiet brilliance of other distant suns were added to the glory of our own. A warm breeze, still laden with the odours of Paradise, gently swayed the tree-tops and changed the colour of the fresh young leaves. It was one of those days whereon blue seems more blue, green more green, light more luminous and love more loving.

Those who accompanied Jesus on that day were rapt in a happy sense of aloofness from the world and from the moment. Never before had their hearts been so overflowing with worship and hope. Peter's cry became that of the small but fervent band that was winding downwards towards the regal city. 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' shouted the women and the young men, and amidst all this rejoicing the Disciples themselves began to hope again, although they were ware that this would be their last day of sunshine, and that He whom they were accompanying must soon die.

With the noisy onrush of a torrent that has burst its bounds, the procession approached the deaf, mysterious and hostile city. These peasants and provincials were advancing amidst waving branches, a moving image of the forests, as would they bring within the city's walls, into the breathless, narrow lanes, somewhat of the country and of liberty. The boldest had cut palm, olive and myrtle branches and long fronds of willow by the wayside, as had they been preparing for the Feast of Tabernacles; and these they waved in the air as they chanted the impassioned words of the Psalms, their eyes fixed upon the shining face of Him who was come in God's name.

And now the first Christian legion has reached the gates

of Jerusalem, and the voices raised in praise never cease crying: 'Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven and glory in the highest!' These cries reach the ears of the Pharisees who are come forth, severe and dignified, to ascertain for themselves the cause of all this seditious uproar. Their wise ears are shocked by these cries, and their suspicious hearts are sore troubled. Some of them, drawing their robes of office more closely around them, shout to Jesus, saying: 'Master, rebuke thy disciples. Dost thou not know that such words may be spoken only to the Lord, or to him who will come in His name?'

But, passing on, Jesus answered: 'I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.'

The immovable, voiceless stones out of which, as John declares, God might have raised up 'children unto Abraham'; the scorching stones of the desert that Jesus would not turn into bread to please His enemy; the hostile stones of the roadway that were twice gathered to cast at Him; even the deaf stones of Jerusalem would have been less deaf, less frigid, less unfeeling than the hearts of the Pharisees.

By that retort Jesus proclaimed Himself the Christ. It was a declaration of war; and indeed hardly had the new King entered His city when His enemies gave the signal to attack.

LVI THE DEN OF THIEVES

Jesus went up to the Temple, where all His enemies were assembled. The sacred stronghold on the hill-top was warming its new whiteness in the sun's glory. The ancient ark of the nomad tribes, that sweating oxen had dragged across the scorching desert and through the heat of battles, had come to a standstill on this summit, had turned to stone, and now stood guard over the regal city. The easily displaced cart of the fugitives was become a mighty citadel of stone and marble, a pompous assemblage of palaces and

soaring stairways, shady arcades and sun-warmed courts; the whole encompassed by walls diving sheer into the valley below, and protected, like any fortress, by bastions and towers. It was not only the enclosure for the Holy of Holies, and the sacrificial altar; it was no longer the Temple only, the abode of religion, the mystic sanctuary of a people. With its watch-towers, storerooms for offerings, vaults for deposits, squares where the traders assembled, arcades where the citizens gathered and found amusement, it was everything save a place of reverence and prayer. It was everything—a fortress in case of siege, a bank for deposits, a fair-ground in times of pilgrimages, an exchange where bargains were concluded, a forum where politicians could argue, doctors hold forth, and time-wasters gossip. It was a place to stroll in, to keep appointments at, to traffic in. Built by an unfaithful king to gain the favour of a captious and seditious people, built to satisfy the pride and the greed of a sacerdotal caste, at once a place of sale and an engine of war, it must have stood, in the eyes of Christ, for the natural meeting-place of all the enemies of His truth.

Jesus went up to the Temple to destroy it. He will leave it to the Romans of Titus to dismantle its walls, break up its masonry, burn its edifices, loot it of its bronze and gold, and reduce Herod's mighty fortress to a heap of smoking ruins. But Christ will destroy, He has indeed already destroyed, those values for which the proud Temple stood, with its great blocks of stones, its paved terraces and its golden doors. This Jesus, going up to the Temple, is He who was transfigured on the mountain, and who is now fulfilling His mission against the mummified Scribes, surrounded by their parchment rolls; He is the Messiah of the new Kingdom come against the usurpers of the Kingdom that is become bastard through compromise, and that lies rotting in its infamy; He is the Gospel advancing against the Talmud; the Future against the Past, the Fire of Love against the Ashes of the Letter. The day of the encounter, the day of battle, has dawned. Surrounded by His singing and rejoicing followers, Jesus ascends steadily towards the

stronghold of His enemies. He knows the road well. How often had He taken it while a little child, in the midst of His fellow-pilgrims from Galilee! How often had He been led upwards towards this Temple amidst dust and noise! And later, as a youth, mingling with the crowd, unrecognized, hot, dazed and weary, how often had He looked upwards towards those walls, in His eagerness to reach the summit, to find up there in the solemn enclosure a little shade for His aching eyes, a little water for His parched lips, a word of comfort for His loving heart!

But to-day all is changed. He is no longer led—it is He who leads, and He goes not to worship but to punish. He knows but too well that behind the fair walls of this lofty sepulchre there is naught but ashes and rottenness; His enemies are there, who sell ashes and feed on rottenness. The first adversary He encounters is the demon of lucre.

Jesus enters the Court of the Gentiles, the most spacious and crowded of all. The great, proud terrace, basking in the sunshine, is not the mere vestibule of a sanctuary, but a disorderly fair-ground. Crowded together and making a deafening noise with their shouting and outcries, are the money-changers, the hucksters, agents and purchasers, amongst whom money is continuously circulating. Here also are the cattle-dealers with their steers and small flocks of sheep; those who sell pigeons, turtle-doves and sparrows are seated comfortably beside their rows of crates; the changers, with their bowls full of gold and silver coins before them, are at their tables. The dealers, trampling in the mud, test the flanks of the animals intended for sacrifice, and cry out in monotonous voices to the women who are come for purification after childbirth, to the pilgrims come to offer a sacrifice of importance, and to the lepers who must offer live birds for their healing. The money-lenders, who may be recognized by a coin they wear suspended from one ear, run their long and clutching fingers with voluptuous enjoyment through the shining, jingling heaps of coins before them; the agents wriggle in and out among the groups; men from the provinces, tight-fisted and wary, hold long confabulations before untying their

purse-strings and handing over small coins in payment of their offerings ; and from time to time the bellowing of an impatient ox drowns alike the plaintive bleating of the lambs, the high-pitched voices of the women, and the jingling of minæ and shekels.

The spectacle is not new to Jesus. He was aware that the house of God had become the house of Mammon, and that instead of silently praying to the Spirit, men trafficked in its courts for love of filthy lucre and with the connivance of the priests, and on this occasion He gives vent to His indignation and disgust. The first step towards destroying the Temple was to destroy the market, and this Eternally Poor One, followed by poor men, now attacks the servants of Mammon without fear or hesitation. Seizing some loose ends of rope He quickly twists them together, and, with the aid of this improvised scourge, lashes a way for Himself through the amazed crowd. The changers' benches are overturned at the first onslaught, and the coins roll upon the ground amidst shouts of surprise and rage. The seats of those who sell doves are flung against the crates, and the birds flutter away in all directions. The herders, perceiving the evil turn things are taking, rush back driving their sheep and oxen towards the gates ; the dealers in sparrows grab their cages and make off ; there is noise and confusion on all sides ; some shout their disapproval and others their satisfaction ; and crowds pour in from other courts to see what it is all about. Jesus, surrounded by the boldest of His followers, brandishes His scourge and drives the last of the money-changers towards the gates, and as He does so His voice rings loudly in the ears of all : 'Take these things hence. . . . My house is the house of prayer ; but ye have made it a den of thieves ! '

And the last of the handlers of filthy lucre are whirled out of the court like rags carried before the wind.

Jesus' act was not only the fitting purification of the sanctuary, but the public manifestation of His loathing for Mammon and its worshippers. Business, the god of modern times, is to Him but a form of thieving. A market is little better than a place of assembly for smooth-tongued

bandits, for despoilers whom all tolerate. But this thing, which custom praises and the law protects, is intolerable to one who will not stoop to the world's base transactions, and who seeks only spiritual treasures. Of all the forms of that legalized thieving known as trade, the most detestable and outrageous is dealing in money. When a man gives us a sheep in exchange for coin we know well enough that he is extorting far more than the sheep is worth, but at least he gives something that is not the odious mineral symbol of riches ; he gives something that is alive, that will supply us with wool in the spring, that will bring forth a lamb which we may eat if we wish. But the exchanging of money for money, of coined metal for coined metal, is unnatural, absurd, an invention of the devil. Everything that has to do with banking, exchange, discount and usury is shameful in a mysterious and odious way, and has always dismayed the simple soul, that is to say, the clean and profoundly upright man. The peasant who sows corn, the tailor who stitches garments, the weaver who weaves the wool and flax, have a right to gain, up to a certain point ; for they add something that was not in the soil, the cloth or the fleece. But that a heap of coins should beget other coins without labour or trouble on the part of man, without his having produced anything tangible, anything that can be consumed or enjoyed, is scandalous beyond all conception. In the money-market the collector of gold and silver becomes the willing slave of the devil's artifices ; and the arch-fiend shows his gratitude by delivering the dominion of the world into the hands of bankers and financiers ; it is they who to-day rule the peoples, who make wars, starve nations, and by an infernal system of suction draw out the very life of the poor, transformed into gold that drips with sweat and blood.

Christ, who pities the rich but hates and condemns riches, which are a first wall between us and a vision of the Kingdom of Heaven, swept the thieves' den clean and purified the Temple where He was to teach the last of the truths He still had to proclaim. By this act of violence, however, He earned the hatred of the entire merchant class. Those

who had been cast out appealed to their protectors to punish Him who sought to ruin trade on the sacred hill. The men of money found willing listeners in the men of the law, who were already exasperated for reasons of their own; especially because, by disorganizing the market in the Temple, Jesus had condemned and materially injured the priests themselves. The most prosperous bazaars were the property of the sons of Annas, who were nearly related to the Supreme Pontiff, Caiaphas. All the doves sold in the Court of the Gentiles to women recently delivered were from the cotes among the cedars belonging to Annas, and the sale of these birds alone brought the priest a neat monthly profit. The bankers, who really had no right to carry on their business in the Temple, handed to the leading Sadducean families belonging to the sacerdotal aristocracy at least one-tenth of the many thousands of shekels they gained every year by changing foreign money. And had they not made of the Temple itself a huge national bank, with safes and strong-rooms for deposits?

Jesus had wounded the twenty thousand priests of Jerusalem both in their prestige and in their purses. He had subverted the value of the falsified and mutilated letter of the Law in the name of which they ruled and waxed fat, and He had furthermore driven out their associates, the traders and changers. Should He conquer, it would involve the absolute ruin of all concerned. But the two castes that were threatened were drawn still closer together by the common necessity for ridding themselves of this dangerous enemy. Merchants and priests made their plans, perhaps on the evening of that very day, to buy a traitor and a cross. The merchants would supply the small sum that was necessary, the clergy would excogitate a plausible religious motive, and the foreign administration, anxious to propitiate both the moneyed classes and the priests, would lend its soldiers.

In the meanwhile Jesus had already left the Temple. He was wending His way through the olive groves towards Bethany.

LVII THE VIPERS OF THE SEPULCHRES

When Jesus returned to the Temple on the morrow, He found the cattle-dealers and traffickers established outside, near the gates, but the courts were noisy with the chatter of the excited populace.

The sentence Jesus had pronounced and executed against the honest thieves had set the city in a ferment. Each time His lash had fallen it had been as a stone flung into this frog-pond that went by the name of Jerusalem. As they saw the whip doing its work, the poor had started from their state of stupor with a thrill of delight, and the rich with gloomy forebodings of evil.

Early in the morning, neglecting their daily occupations, all had climbed the hill to the Temple, trooping forth from dark lanes or noble palaces, gathering from the workshop and the market-place ; and all were in a mood of restless expectation, for they looked forward to witnessing either some new, miraculous events or the execution of vengeance. The day-labourers were there, and the wool-workers and the dyers, the shoemakers and the carpenters ; all those who hated the small traders, the usurers, those shearers of the miserable fleeces of the poor, the barterers who succeeded in enriching themselves at the expense of the indigent. Among the first to arrive were the city's most wretched outcasts—the ragged and filthy, the flea-bitten captives of eternal beggary with their leprosies, their open sores, their bones visible beneath the emaciated skin as if to certify their state of perpetual hunger. Pilgrims from outlying regions arrived also—those from Galilee who had accompanied Jesus on His festive descent, and with them the Jews from the colonies in Egypt and Syria, wearing their festal garments, like relations residing at a distance who, from time to time, return to the home for some family gathering.

In groups of four or five, the Scribes and Pharisees also walked upwards to the Temple. These men fraternized and were indeed worthy to be allies and colleagues. The Scribes were the doctors of the Law, the Pharisees its

puritans. Almost all Scribes were Pharisees, and many Pharisees were Scribes. Fancy a professor who, to the pedantry attendant on his calling, adds the hypocrisy of the stickler ; a zealot with the sourness of a casuistic pedagogue, and you will have a modern image of the Scribe who was a Pharisee and of the Pharisee who was a Scribe. A pretender to religion with a doctor's degree, a canting academician, or a philosophizing Quaker would also convey a more or less accurate idea of him.

These men, then, went up to the Temple on that morning with a great show of pride, but inwardly hiding the most evil of purposes. They ascended pompously, wrapped in their long cloaks with fluttering fringes. With their chests thrown well out, their nostrils quivering, a wry smile upon their lips, and casting threatening glances from side to side, they advanced, their step bespeaking their majesty and sense of outrage, as the privileged Shereefs of the Almighty.

Jesus, with thousands of eyes fixed upon Him that seemed to reflect somewhat of His own light, stood waiting for them. It was not the first time He had come in contact with such as they. How many encounters He had had with provincial Pharisees in the course of His wanderings ! Those men had wanted signs from heaven and miraculous proofs of His Messiahship, because, unlike the sceptical Sadducees, who were steeped in codified Epicureanism, the Pharisees looked for the speedy advent of the Saviour. But they were convinced that He would be a strictly orthodox Jew like themselves, and they furthermore believed that, because they kept themselves outwardly clean and observed every minutest rule laid down in Leviticus, they were worthy to receive Him. The Messiah, the Son of David, would never deign to save one who has not avoided all contact, even the most remote, with the stranger and the idolater ; one who had not obeyed all the commandments of the code of purification ; one who had not paid to the Temple all that was due from him ; one who did not, at all costs, respect the rest ordained for the Sabbath. In their eyes Jesus could not possibly be the divine being for whose coming they were prepared. There

had been no sign either of a magical or spectacular nature. This Man had but healed the sick and preached and practised love. They had seen Him sitting at meat with publicans and sinners, and they had also observed with disgust that His Disciples did not always wash their hands before partaking of food. But what horrified them most, what in their minds was scandalous beyond endurance, was the fact that these people did not respect the Sabbath. Jesus did not hesitate to heal the sick on that day, nor did He deem it sinful to succour His suffering neighbour on the Sabbath. He had, in fact, actually gloried in His attitude, and blasphemously declared that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath !

One question only could there be in the minds of these Pharisees with regard to Jesus : was He a madman, or an impostor ? They had repeatedly sought to ascertain by setting traps, theological or dialectical, for Him, but always to no purpose. So long as He had been content to wander about in the provinces followed by a handful of common peasants, they had let Him alone, for they were convinced that, one day or another, even these would become disillusioned and desert Him. But now matters were becoming serious. Followed by a crowd of half-drunken countrymen, He had dared to enter the Temple with an air of ownership, and had succeeded in persuading an ignorant rabble to proclaim Him the Messiah. But, worse still, He had dared to trespass upon priestly privileges, had assumed a regal air and had resorted to violence to drive the merchants from the Temple—those honest, pious men, who admired the Pharisees even though they did not follow their example in all things. Hitherto the Scribes and Pharisees had been forbearing and merciful to a fault. But the time was come when the surpassing clemency of these most humane doctors was inopportune, and if persisted in might even become dangerous. This outrageous scandal, these repeated profanations, this public challenge must be met with punishment and vengeance. This false Christ must be suppressed, and that without delay. The Scribes and Pharisees were going up to the Temple to ascertain whether

He had indeed had the effrontery to return to the spot His presumption had contaminated.

And it was precisely for them that Jesus was waiting, surrounded by a restless crowd of pilgrims. It was to their very faces, in the presence of all, with the open sky as witness, that He would tell them what the Almighty thought of them—that He would give them the truth about themselves. The day before He had pronounced judgment with the scourge against the dealers in animals and the tricksters in money. To-day it was the turn of the traffickers in the Word, of the usurers of the Law, of the changers of Truth. However, the sentence passed upon them on that day did not exterminate them. Every generation reproduces them in masses, under new names, but the mark of that sentence is stamped upon them for all time, wherever they may have been born, wherever they hold sway.

'Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!'

They may be guilty of one sin only, but that is the most heinous, the most unpardonable of all—the sin against the Holy Ghost—the sin against Truth—the betrayal both of the Spirit and of Truth—the destruction of the only pure treasure the world possesses. The thief steals treasures that are but ephemeral, the murderer kills but the perishable body, the harlot does but pollute flesh that is doomed to putrefaction, but the hypocrite defiles the word of the Absolute, steals the promises of eternity, murders the soul. In him everything is deception, the habit he wears, his words and teachings. His actions contradict his teachings; the inner man has naught in common with the outer; his hidden impurity gainsays and derogates his precepts. He is a hypocrite because he fastens heavy burdens upon the shoulders of others, and then will not raise a finger to help them to bear them; he is a hypocrite because he covers himself with a fringed mantle and wears broad phylacteries that he may be honoured and addressed as master in public places, whereas in reality he has hidden the key to knowledge and closed the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven, which he himself will never enter nor help others to enter. He is a hypocrite because he prays at great length in the sight of

all, and then turns and seizes the widow's house and takes advantage of the weak and the outcast. He is a hypocrite because he 'makes clean the outside of the cup and of the platter,' while within he is 'full of extortion and excess.' He is a hypocrite because he is careful to observe the smallest detail of religious ceremonial and of purification, and neglects what is of greater moment; because he is of those who 'strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.' He is a hypocrite because he obeys the very least of the commandments and overlooks the only one that is of importance, because he 'pays tithe of mint and anise and cummin,' but is without 'judgment, mercy and faith.' He is a hypocrite because he 'builds the tombs of the prophets and garnishes the sepulchres of the righteous' of old, but persecutes the righteous who are still alive, and is preparing to slay the prophets. 'Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?' Jesus cries to the Scribes and Pharisees. '. . . Behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.'

They have accepted the legacy of Cain. They are the descendants, the progeny of Cain—fratricides and slayers of prophets. And as He did to Cain so the Almighty has set a sign upon their foreheads, the mysterious sign of immortality. They cannot be slain, for their own hands must slay. The fugitive fratricide was made safe by that sign amongst the world's first inhabitants, and throughout the centuries the deadly Pharisees shall be safe, because Almighty God has need of them in the carrying out of His great scheme of justice, which to the feeble eyes of the feeble seems but foolishness and insanity. An eternal law, of which the majority of men receive no revelation, condemns those who would imitate God to suffer death in its most awful forms. But no mere man can slay a saint, or

even a sinner, who is the miraculous chrysalis of possible holiness. And the saint would cease to be such should he take the life of another saint, of the only brother vouchsafed him by the Father. For this reason the indestructible race of the Pharisees was created, a race destined to thrive in all times and among all peoples. They are beings who were never simple like little children, and who know not the road to salvation; beings who are not sinners in the eyes of the world, but who, nevertheless, are the very incarnation of most awful wickedness; beings who would be deemed saints, but who hate the truly saintly. These men, the fitting instruments of a fearful but necessary slaughter, God has appointed to be the executioners of the perfect. Faithful to their mission, as invulnerable as hell-born fiends, marked as Cain was marked, like hypocrisy and cruelty immortal, they have withstood all dispersion and survived all vanished kingdoms. Prolific and grasping, with other faces, other garments, and other rules and precepts, down to this very day they have continued to spread throughout the world. And when they have failed to slay with nails and fire, the axe and the knife, they have used the tongue and the pen, achieving thus the most satisfactory results.

When He addressed them in the great court, crowded with witnesses, Jesus was conscious that He was addressing His own judges, the men who, through others, would be the true authors of His death. His silence before Pilate and Caiaphas is henceforth justified. He has condemned them, and they will condemn Him; He has been the first to judge, and will have nothing further to say when they shall sit in judgment upon Him.

Images of death rise before Him as He harangues them. Vipers and sepulchres; black and treacherous vipers that empty the contents of their hidden poison-glands into the blood of all with whom they come in contact; whited sepulchres, outwardly beautiful but inwardly reeking with corruption.

The Pharisees, those who stood before Jesus and all their lineal descendants, are fond of hiding in the shadow of the tombs the better to prepare their poison. As cold as

the serpent's skin and the stones of the sepulchres, neither the heat of the sun, nor the fire of love, nor even that of hell itself will ever warm them. They know all words save the Word of Life.

'Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!' for ye are like unto hidden graves, and he who treads upon you wots it not. The only One to know your corruption is Jesus, and it is on account of this knowledge that He will remain only two days within the tomb you are preparing for Him.

LVIII ONE STONE UPON ANOTHER

The Thirteen were leaving the Temple to return to the Mount of Olives, as they had done the day before, when one of the Disciples (which one? John, son of Salome perhaps, who had still much of the child about him and was therefore still capable of astonishment, or Judas Iscariot, who had great respect for riches) said to Jesus :—

'Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!'

The Master turned to look upon the lofty walls covered with marble that Herod's splendour had erected on the hill-top, and replied :—

'Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.'

He who had been so full of admiration was silenced. No one had the courage to answer, but all, perplexed and troubled, considered these words within themselves as they walked. They seemed hard words to the ears of calculating Jews, to those narrow-minded, ambitious provincials. He who loved them had on two recent occasions spoken other words that were hard to listen to, hard to understand, and hard to believe. But they could not recall anything quite so harsh as that. They knew that He was the Christ and that He must suffer and die, but they hoped that He would rise again immediately in all the triumphant glory of a new David, to bestow abundance upon Israel, and upon themselves, who had faithfully shared the perils and hardships

of His wanderings, power and the highest rewards. But if Judea was to rule the world, then Jerusalem must rule Judea, and the ruler's seat must be in the great king's temple. Even though it be now occupied by the unfaithful Sadducees, the hypocritical Pharisees, and the treacherous Scribes, the Christ would certainly cast them all out and put His Apostles in their places. How, then, could the Temple possibly be destroyed, that splendid relic of a kingdom that was of the past, that hoped-for stronghold of the Kingdom to come ?

To Peter and his companions these words seemed more uncompromising than the very stones themselves. Had not the Baptist said that the Son of God could raise up children unto Abraham of the stones of Jordan ? Had not Satan said that the Son of God could change the stones of the desert into loaves of wheaten bread ? Had not Jesus Himself said, as He passed within the gates of Jerusalem, that the very stones, instead of men, would have shouted greetings and sung hymns of praise ? And had He not caused the stones to fall from the hands of His enemies when they would have stoned Him, and from the grasp of them who accused the woman taken in adultery ?

The Disciples could not understand the meaning of Jesus' words. That these stones, wrenched from the flank of the mountains, drawn hither by straining oxen, squared, skilfully polished and set in place by the master-builders, forming now the most marvellous temple in the world—that these glistening, sun-warmed stones should ever be separated and reduced to a heap of ruins they could not believe !

But when they had reached the Mount of Olives and Christ had seated Himself opposite the Temple, they could no longer restrain their curiosity.

' Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign of thy coming ? ' they asked.

In His answer He warns them of the signs which shall be before the last day—a second Sermon on the Mount. On that first occasion He had begun by stating in what way the spirit was to be remade for the founding of the

Kingdom ; but now, knowing the day of His death was so near, He told of the punishment that awaited the rebellious and described His second advent.

This sermon, which is less well understood and more completely disregarded than the other, is not, as most people believe, an answer to a single question. The Disciples asked two questions. 'When will this thing thou hast foretold, this destruction of the Temple, come to pass ? And what will be the signs of thy coming ?' The reply is twofold also. Jesus foretells, first, the events that will precede the fall of Jerusalem, and then describes the signs of His second coming. This prophetic discourse is really composed of two parts, and each part is based on a distinct prophecy. The first was fulfilled before Jesus' generation was extinct, less than forty years after His death. The second has not yet been fulfilled, but this present generation may perhaps not pass away without beholding its first signs.

LIX THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

Jesus knew His Disciples' weakness—weakness of the spirit and perhaps also of the flesh ; and He immediately warns them against two of the greatest dangers : that of being deceived and of martyrdom.

'Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ ; and shall deceive many. . . . Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there ; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. . . . For many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ, and the time draweth near. Go ye not therefore after them.'

But if they escape the snares set for them by false Messiahs, they will not be able to escape persecution at the hands of the enemies of the true Christ. 'Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you ; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. . . .

They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons; being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. . . . And ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends. . . . Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. . . . And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and hate one another. . . . And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. . . . But there shall not an hair of your head perish. . . . But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.'

Then will begin the signs of imminent chastisement. 'But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. . . . Nation shall rise up against nation and kingdom against kingdom. And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

Such will be the forewarnings. The world's order will be overthrown. The earth, that was at peace, will see man rise against man and nation against nation. And the earth itself, soaked with blood, will rise up against men; it will tremble beneath their feet, rend their houses asunder, vomit forth ashes as were the mouths of its mountains casting forth the ashes of all its dead; and the corn that turns yellow in the fields, year by year, will be denied to the fratricides.

Then, when all these things shall have been, chastisement will come upon the people that refused new birth in Christ and would not receive the Gospel, on the city that slew the prophets, that nailed its Saviour to a cross on 'the place named' Golgotha, and persecuted His witnesses.

'And when ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that the dissolution thereof is nigh. . . . When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, . . . then let them which are in Judea flee to the moun-

tains ; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out ; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. . . . Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take anything out of his house : neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days ! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day. For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. . . . For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.'

The first prophecy is finished. Jerusalem will be taken and destroyed, and of the Temple, defiled by the ' abomination of desolation,' not one stone will remain upon another.

But Jesus has not said all as yet. He has not spoken of His second coming. ' Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.' What is meant by the ' times of the Gentiles,' *tempora nationum* ? The word used in the Greek text expresses its meaning with greater precision than any other ; the times best adapted, the fitting, convenient times of the Gentiles, which means the times wherein those who are not Jews will be converted to the Gospel which was first preached to the Jews. Therefore the real end will not come until the Message has been delivered to all peoples, until the Gentiles, the infidels, shall have ' trodden down ' Jerusalem. ' And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world unto all nations ; and then shall the end come.'

Christ's second coming from heaven, the *Parusia*, will mark the end of this world and the beginning of the true world, of the eternal Kingdom. The end of Judea was foretold by signs that were mainly human and terrestrial ; the end of the world will be preceded by signs that will be mainly of a celestial and divine order. ' And there shall

be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars ; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ; the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth ; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.'

For the end of Jerusalem only this little earth of ours was affected, but for this universal end the sky itself will be convulsed. In the great and sudden darkness nothing will be heard save the roaring of the waters and the cries of terror. The day of the Lord is come ! The day of the Lord's wrath, of which Ezekiel and Jeremiah and Isaiah and Joel prophesied. ' The day of the Lord is at hand ; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. . . . A day of darkness and of gloominess. . . . Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt : and they shall be afraid : pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them ; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth ; they shall be amazed at one another ; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate ; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light ; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. . . . And the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll ; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine. . . .'

Such is the day of the Father—a day of darkness in heaven and of fear on earth. But immediately afterwards the day of the Son will begin.

On His second coming He will not appear in a dark stable, but in the sky ; no longer in secret and in poverty, but in strength and shining glory. ' And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.' And when the celestial summons shall have awakened all who are in the tombs, the irrevocable choosing will begin.

'When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Insomuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, unto everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Insomuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.'

Even in the midst of His glory as Judge on the last day, Jesus will not forget the poor and the unhappy He loved so well when He dwelt upon the earth. He chose to appear as one of the 'least,' who hold out their hands at the gate, and whom the 'great' despise. He lived in the days of Tiberius, He who was avid of bread and of love, who thirsted

for water and martyrdom, who was as a stranger in His own land, who was unacknowledged by His own brethren, who stripped Himself to clothe another, who was sick with sorrow and whom no one comforted, who was held captive in the vile prison of the flesh, in the wretched prison-house called Earth. He was the Divine One who hungered for souls and thirsted for faith, the Stranger from a land defying description, who, naked, was scourged and spit upon, who was sick with the holy madness of love. But to-day He is not thinking of Himself, as He did not think of Himself when He dwelt among men.

The code of the Choosing can have but one title—Mercy. Throughout all the time that has elapsed since His first advent He has continued to live in the poor, in the pilgrims, the sick, the tortured, the outcasts and slaves. And now He is come to pay His debts. Kindness shown to the 'least' was in reality shown to Him, and He will reward it in the name of all. Only those who did not give Him welcome when He appeared to them as one of the needy will be condemned to everlasting suffering, for in driving the wretched from their door they were driving away God Himself, and in refusing bread, water and a cloak to the needy they were condemning the Son of God to suffer hunger, thirst and cold. The Father does not need your help, for everything is His, and He loves you even when you curse Him. But we must love the Father in the person of His Son. And those who have denied a cup of water to the thirsty must suffer everlasting thirst; those who have not clothed the naked shall burn for ever; those who have not comforted the prisoner shall suffer everlasting imprisonment in Gehenna; those who have not welcomed the stranger will be shut out from heaven for all eternity; the teeth of him who failed to succour one sick with a fever shall chatter with an ague that shall never end.

On the day of His glory the great Lord of Poverty will award, out of His infinite wealth, each one according to his merit. Then the bare heavens will be decked again with other and brighter suns, the stars will shine forth once more, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and

those who are risen from the dead will no longer live like the beasts, as they now do here below, but in the very likeness of the angels.

LX WORDS THAT PASS NOT AWAY

When will these things come to pass? We now know in what way, but we know not at what time. Shall we who listen in the light of the sun witness their fulfilment, or will it be in the days of our children's children, when we ourselves shall be but dust and ashes beneath the sod?

Until the very end the Twelve remained as obtuse as twelve stones. Truth walked beside them and they saw it not; Light was in their midst but did not enlighten them. Had they but been as the diamond among stones, that reflects back the light it has received! But they were uncut stones, just dug out of the darkness of the quarry; deaf, opaque stones that the sun warms but can never make to flash back its light, stones that may be illumined outwardly but that reflect no brilliance. The Twelve had not yet grasped the fact that Jesus was no common magician, a pupil of the Chaldeans or of Tages, and that He knew naught of the bold jugglery of the astrologers. They did not understand that had Jesus definitely fixed a time His sermon would not have had an immediate effect in persuading men to set about a reform whose accomplishment demands perpetual vigilance. They had not even perceived, perhaps, that the revelation made on the Mount of Olives was a double prophecy referring to two different events that were separated by a great lapse of time. Very probably those simple fishermen, to whom a lake was a sea and Judea the universe, had confused the end of the Jewish people with the end of the human race, the chastisement of Jerusalem with the second advent of Christ.

Jesus' discourse, however, which has come down to us as one whole, clearly reveals two distinct prophecies concerning two great events.

The first foretells the end of the Jewish kingdom, the chastisement of Jerusalem and the destruction of the

Temple ; the second foretells the end of the old world, the reappearance of Jesus, the judgment of the merciful and of them who showed no mercy, and the beginning of the new kingdom. The first is said to be near at hand (' Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation '), and is represented as being limited to one locality, for it concerns Judea alone and more especially its capital. No one knows the time and hour wherein the second prophecy will be fulfilled, for certain necessary but slowly-developing events must precede the end which, unlike the other, will be universal.

The first prophecy, in fact, was fulfilled to the letter within the forty years which followed the Crucifixion, while many who had known Jesus were yet alive. The second advent, the *Perusia* of triumph of which we are every day reminded when we recite the Apostles' Creed, is still looked forward to by all who believe in Him who said : ' Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.'

Jesus had been dead but a few years when signs pointing to the fulfilment of the first prediction began to appear. There arose false Christs, and Judea swarmed with false apostles as the earth swarms with snakes when the dog-days bring them forth from their hiding-places. Before Pontius Pilate had been sent into exile an impostor arose in Samaria who promised to find the sacred vessels of the Tabernacle, which Moses had buried on Mount Gerizim. The Samaritans believed that the recovery of these vessels would be a sign of the coming of the Messiah, and a great armed band assembled on the mountain and maintained a threatening attitude there until they were finally scattered by the Roman sword.

Under Cuspius Fadus, the procurator who ruled between the years 44 and 66, a certain Theudas arose and, pretending to possess great powers, promised many wonders. Four hundred followed him, but he was taken and beheaded, and his disciples were dispersed. After him there came from Egypt a Jew, who succeeded in collecting a following of four thousand wretched outcasts, with whom he camped on the Mount of Olives, proclaiming that, at a signal from

him, the walls of Jerusalem would collapse. The procurator attacked him and forced him to flee into the desert.

Meanwhile Simon the Magician was acquiring great renown. He bewitched many by his incantations and necromancy, and declared himself to be the 'Great Power of God,' and was believed in by a large number of followers. This man, seeing the miracles Peter was performing, determined to become a Christian, because, deeming the Gospel to be but one of the many mysteries of Oriental origin, he believed initiation would enhance his powers of necromancy. Repulsed by Peter, the magician became the father of heresies. He preached that Ennoia, an emanation of the Supreme Deity, is imprisoned in every human being; that Helena of Tyre, a harlot who followed him everywhere, was the incarnation of Ennoia, and that faith in Helena and himself was a necessary condition of salvation. Cerinthus, the first Gnostic, against whom John wrote his Gospel, and Menander who boasted to be himself the saviour of the world, were his pupils. Another, Elkasai, confused the old covenant and the new; talked of many incarnations besides that of Christ, and with his disciples gave himself up to the study of magic and astrology. Hegesippus relates that a certain Tebutis, out of jealousy of Simeon the second bishop of Jerusalem, founded a sect whose members recognized Jesus as the Messiah, but in all other ways remained faithful to the teachings of Judaism. Paul in his epistle to Timothy warns the 'saints' against Hymenæus, Philetus and Alexander, 'for such are deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ,' who distorted truth and sowed the evil seed of heresy in the first churches. One called Dositheus assumed the name of Christ. A certain Nicolas engendered by his errors the sect of the Nicolaitans whom John condemned in Revelations, and the Zealots, who declared that the Romans and all Gentiles must be driven out in order that God might come at last and triumph with His people, were the cause of oft-recurring uprisings.

The second sign, that of persecution, had not been long in coming. Hardly had the Apostles begun to preach the

Gospel in Jerusalem when Peter and John were seized and cast into prison, whence they were delivered only to be arrested a second time, scourged, and warned to preach no more in the name of Jesus. Stephen, one of the most zealous among the neophytes, was stoned to death outside the walls, by order of the priests.

Under the government of Agrippa tribulation began again. In 42 this descendant of Herod caused James the Elder, who was the brother of John, to die by the sword, and for the third time Peter suffered imprisonment. In 62 James the Just, called the Brother of the Lord, was flung from the terrace of the Temple and then stoned to death. In the year 50 Claudius expelled the Jewish Christians from Rome—*impulsore Chresto tumultuantes* ; in 58 the conversion of Pomponia Græcina was the cause of the first hostilities against converts in the capital. In 64 the burning of Rome, planned and executed by Nero, afforded a pretext for the first great persecution. At that time a multitude of Christians earned the palm of martyrdom both in Rome and throughout the provinces. Many were crucified ; others, enveloped in the *tunica molesta*, served as torches to light the Cæsar on his nocturnal prowlings ; others again, wrapped in the skins of wild beasts, were flung to the dogs, and many, after being forced to bear a part in the hellish spectacles held in the amphitheatres, met death there in the jaws of the lions. It was also about that time that Peter was nailed, head downwards, to the cross.

Beneath the axe Paul ended a life that, ever since his conversion, had been one long torment. In 57, ten years before his death, he had been scourged five times by the Jews, three times beaten with rods by the Romans, seven times imprisoned, three times shipwrecked, and at Listra beaten and left for dead. Most of the other Apostles suffered similar punishments. Thomas was put to death in India, Andrew was crucified at Patras and Bartholomew in Armenia. Simon Zelotes and Matthew also died upon the cross like their Master.

' Wars and rumours of wars ' were not wanting. When Christ suffered, the world was still enjoying the peace of

Augustus ; but very soon ' people rose against people and nation against nation.' Under Nero the Britons defeated and massacred the Romans ; the Parthians rebelled and constrained the legions to pass beneath the yoke ; Armenia and Syria protested against foreign domination, and Gaul rose in rebellion. Nero was nearing his end : the legions of Spain and Gaul proclaimed Galba emperor ; Nero, forced at last to flee from his Golden House, proved to be a coward even in the very act of destroying himself ; Galba entered Rome, but not to bring peace. Nymphidius Sabinus at Rome, Capito in Germany, Clodius Macer in Africa were all striving to wrest the empire from him. He gave satisfaction to none, and on January 15 of the year 69 the Prætorians assassinated him and proclaimed Otho. But the legions in Germany had already proclaimed Vitellius, and were on their way to Rome. Defeated at Betriacum, Otho took his life, but Vitellius was unable to maintain his position. The legions of Syria proclaimed Vespasian, who despatched Antonius Primus to Italy. The followers of Vitellius were defeated at Cremona and again at Rome, and the swinish Vitellius was murdered on December 20 of the year 69. Meanwhile in the north the insurrection of the Batavi, under Claudius Civilis, had not yet been put down, and in the east the Jews had revolted. In less than two years Italy was twice taken, two emperors committed suicide and two others were assassinated. And there were wars and rumours of war on the banks of the Rhine, the Danube, the Po and the Tiber, on the shores of the North Sea and at the foot of Atlas and Mount Tabor.

The other scourges which Jesus had foretold all descended during that period upon the Empire, whose foundations were already shaken. The mad Caligula complained that nothing terrible was happening under his reign, and prayed for famine, pestilence and earthquake. This vile, incestuous epileptic did not live to see his wishes fulfilled, but in the days of Claudius a series of bad crops brought famine to the very gates of Rome. Under Nero pest was added to famine, and in the course of a single autumn thirty thousand deaths were registered at Rome.

In the years 61 and 62, Asia, Achaia and Macedonia were shaken by earthquakes; the cities of Hierapolis, of Laodicea, and of Colosse suffering most severely. In the year 63 it was Italy's turn. At Naples, Pompeii and Nocera the earth shook, and all Campania was in a state of terror; and as were this not enough, three years later Campania was devastated by a series of whirlwinds and water-spouts that destroyed the crops and increased the threat of famine. While Galba was entering Rome (68) a great rumbling was heard and the earth shook beneath his feet. Everything prophesied had come to pass, and the times were ripe for the destruction of Judea.

The earthquake that visited Jerusalem on the Friday of the Crucifixion was as a signal for the convulsion of Judea. For forty years the land of the deicides knew no peace—not even the peace of defeat and slavery—until the day when of the Temple there remained not one stone upon another.

Pilate, Cuspius Fadus and Agrippa had had to deal with the followers of false Messiahs. Under the procurator Tiberius Alexander, the first serious rebellion on the part of the Zealots ended in the crucifixion of its leaders, James and Simeon, the sons of Judas of Galilee. The procurator Ventidius Cumanus (48-52) had not a moment's peace; the Zealots, with whom the still fiercer Sicarii had formed an alliance, would not lay down their arms. Under the procurator Felix uprisings never ceased, and under Albinus the flames of rebellion burnt more fiercely than ever. At last, in the days of Gessius Florus (64-66), who was the last procurator of Judea, the fire that had so long smouldered spread over the whole land. The Zealots made themselves masters of the Temple; Florus was obliged to flee; Agrippa, who went to them as a mediator, was stoned, and Jerusalem fell into the hands of Menahem, another son of Judas of Galilee. The Zealots and Sicarii, who were now masters, butchered all who were not Jews, and even many Jews whom they suspected of being lukewarm.

And then came the 'abomination of desolation' foretold by Daniel and alluded to by Christ. Daniel's prophecy had been fulfilled a first time when Antiochus Epiphanes

had profaned the Temple by placing therein the statue of Jupiter Olympius. In the year 39 the mad Caligula, who had set himself up for a god and was worshipped as such in several places, ordered the procurator Petronius to place the imperial statue in the Temple, but he died before the command was executed. Jesus, however, had alluded to something far worse than a mere statue. During the great rebellion the holy place, occupied by the Sicarii, became the resort of murderers, and the majestic courts ran with blood, even with sacerdotal blood. The holy city itself also suffered the 'abomination of desolation,' for in September 66, Cestius Gallus, who was come at the head of forty thousand men to put down the insurrection, pitched his camp beneath the walls of Jerusalem, and raised those imperial ensigns the Jews abhorred as idolatrous and which, thanks to the emperors' forbearance, had never yet been brought into the city.

But Cestius Gallus, encountering stronger resistance than he had anticipated, withdrew, and his withdrawal was quickly resolved into flight, to the intense delight of the Zealots, who regarded this victory as a sign of divine favour. At that time, between the first siege and the second, when the twofold abomination had already brought desolation upon both Temple and city, the Christians of Jerusalem, in fulfilment of Christ's predictions, fled to Pella on the other side of the Jordan. But Rome had no intention of yielding to the Jews. Titus Flavius Vespasianus was appointed to lead a punitive expedition, and in the year 67 he assembled his army at Ptolemais, whence he marched into the province of Galilee and subdued it. When the Romans had taken up their winter quarters, John of Gischala, one of the leaders of the Zealots who had taken refuge in Jerusalem, at the head of a band of Idumeans, overthrew the government of the aristocracy, whereupon the city became the scene of much rioting and bloodshed.

On his leaving for Rome to assume the reins of empire, Vespasian entrusted the command of the forces to Titus, who arrived before Jerusalem at the moment of the Passover in the year 70, and immediately laid siege to the city.

Then the days of terror began. At the moment when the danger was at its greatest the Zealots, in a frenzy of rage, broke up into parties and began fighting among themselves for the control of the city.

John of Gischala held the Temple, Simon of Gioras the lower town, and between them the factions exterminated all those who had escaped death at the hands of the Romans. Meanwhile Vespasian had made himself master of two lines of walls and of a part of the city, and on August 5 the Tower itself fell into his hands. To the horrors of siege and civil war were now added those of hunger, and so terrible was the famine that, if we are to believe Josephus, mothers were seen to kill and devour their own children. On August 10 the Temple was taken and burnt; the Zealots took refuge in the upper town, but, overcome by hunger, they were forced to surrender on September 7.

The prophecies of Jesus were fulfilled. By order of Titus the city was destroyed, and of the Temple, already damaged by fire, not one stone was left upon another. Those of the Jews who had survived the famine and escaped the sword of the Sicarii were massacred by the victorious soldiers, and of those remaining some were sent into Egypt to work in the mines, while many were put to death in the amphitheatres of Cæsarea and Berytus for the amusement of the populace. A few hundred of the finest specimens were taken prisoners to Rome to figure in the triumph of Vespasian and Titus, and at Rome Simon of Gioras and other leaders of the Zealots were slaughtered before the idols they abhorred.

'Verily I say unto you that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.' It was the seventieth year of the era of Christ, and not all who belonged to His generation had gone down to their graves when these things happened. One among them who had listened to His words on the Mount of Olives—John—witnessed the punishment of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. Within the time established the words of Jesus were repeated, syllable for syllable, and with atrocious precision, in a story of fire and blood.

The first end, the partial, local ending, the end of the deicide race is come. As Christ had foretold, the stones of the Temple lie strewn among its ruins, and the faithful worshippers have either suffered death or are scattered among the nations.

The second prophecy still remains unfulfilled. When will the Son of Man again return to earth 'coming in the clouds,' preceded by a period of darkness and heralded by the trumpets of the angels? No man, Jesus tells us, can know the hour of His coming. The Son of Man is compared to the lightning that 'cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west,' to a thief who comes in the night, to a master who has been on a long journey and returns unexpectedly to take his servants by surprise. We must watch and be prepared. We must purify ourselves because we know not when He will come, and woe unto him who is not worthy to appear before Him! 'And take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.'

But although Jesus does not reveal the day to us, He tells us, nevertheless, what things must come to pass before its dawn. These things are two in number: the Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached to all peoples and the Gentiles must no longer trample Jerusalem under foot. These two conditions have now been fulfilled, and the great day is perhaps at hand. There is not a single civilized nation, not even one savage tribe, to whom the descendants of the Apostles have not preached the Gospel; and since 1918 the Moslem has ceased to hold sway in Jerusalem; there is even talk of resurrecting a Jewish state. When, according to Hosea, the children of Israel who have been so long without king or altar shall be converted to the Son of David and shall return, trembling, to the Lord's goodness, the end of all time will be near at hand.

If the words of Jesus' second prophecy are as true as

those of the first have proved to be, the Parusia cannot be far distant. Once more in the years that are but just past, nation rose up against nation and the earth shook, causing many deaths ; and pestilence, famine and rebellions have decimated the peoples. For more than a century Christ's word has been preached to all races in their native tongues. Soldiers who believe in Christ now hold sway in that city which, since its fall, has been at the mercy of Romans, Persians, Arabs, Egyptians and Turks.

But men do not remember Jesus and His promise. They live as though the world would stand unchanged for ever, as it has stood heretofore, and all their efforts are directed to increasing their well-being here on earth and in the flesh. 'For as in the days that were before the flood,' Jesus says, 'they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. . . . Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot ; they did eat, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded ; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.'

The same thing is happening to-day, despite the wars and pestilences that have mowed down millions in a few short years. Man eats, drinks, marries, builds, buys, sells, writes and gambles. And no one has a thought for the Divine Thief who will come secretly and by night ; no one is preparing to receive the True Master who will return when He is least expected ; no one watches the sky to see whether 'the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth into the west.'

The phantom life of living men is as the restless sleep of one in the grip of a fever. They seem to be awake because, in their delirium, they strive for things that are but mire and poison. They never look on high, and fear only their fellow-men. Perhaps they are waiting to be aroused at the last hour by the dead of old, who will rise from their graves at the approach of the Christ of Resurrection.

While Jesus was pronouncing sentence against the Temple and Jerusalem, those who battened upon the Temple and were the masters of Jerusalem were preparing His condemnation

The property-holders, teachers, and those in command are but waiting for the moment when it will be safe to murder Him. All those who have a name, a position, a school, a business, all those who hold a sacred office or possess an atom of authority are against Him. In their asinine stupidity they believe that by sending Him to death they will save themselves, and they do not know that His death is necessary to bring about their own chastisement.

In order to understand the hatred that all classes in Jerusalem felt for Jesus—a hatred shared by priest, scholar and merchant alike—it must be remembered that the holy city, who lived in appearance *for* religion, in reality lived *on* religion. Only in this metropolis of Judaism could sacrifice that was acceptable and truly efficacious be made to the God of their fathers, and therefore, year by year, crowds of Israelites from all the tetrarchates of Palestine, and indeed from all parts of the empire, flocked hither for the seasons of festival. Not only was the Temple the one legitimate sanctuary of the Jews but, for them who served it as for all who dwelt below its walls, it was the great breast that fed the capital with the profits derived from the sacrificial victims, offerings, tithes, and above all, from the ceaseless flow of passing guests. Josephus relates that, on certain especial occasions, as many as three million pilgrims would gather in Jerusalem. The inhabitants lived the year round on what the Temple afforded ; the fortunes of the cattle and provision dealers, of the changers and tavern-keepers, and even of the artisans were bound up with those of the Temple. The sacerdotal caste that, in the time of Christ, numbered (without the Levites, of whom there was also a great flock) some twenty thousand descendants of Aaron, derived its support from the offerings in kind, from the

tithes due to the Temple, from ransoms paid for the first-born (five shekels were paid for the first-born of man), and fed upon the flesh of the sacrificial victims, of which only the fat was burnt. To the priests was due the best either of flock or harvest; the people even supplied them with bread, for the head of each family was bound to bestow upon them the twenty-fourth part of all the bread baked under his roof. As we have seen, many made great profit by raising the animals the faithful must purchase for sacrifice; some were associated with the money-changers, and it is not improbable that there were real bankers among them, for the pious were glad to deposit their savings in the strong-boxes of the Temple.

A stream of common interests, therefore, flowed from the great pile Herod had erected, and converged upon the mat whereon the street-vendor spreads his wares, and upon the threshold of the sandal-maker's hovel. The priests lived on the Temple, and many of them were wealthy merchants. The rich made use of the Temple to increase their gain and to keep the people in subjection; the traffickers did business with the rich who could spend freely, with the priests who were their partners, and with the pilgrims who were drawn to the Temple from all parts of the world; the labourers and the poor lived upon the leavings and crumbs from the tables of the priests, the wealthy, the pilgrims.

Religion, in a word, was the principal, perhaps the only industry in Jerusalem. He, therefore, who dared to attack religion, its representatives, or the visible monument that was its most profitable and famous seat, must perforce be regarded as the enemy of the people of Jerusalem, and more especially of the wealthy and of those whose profits were largest.

The teachings of Jesus were a direct menace to the passion and prosperity of these classes. If all the injunctions of the Law were to be reduced to the practice of love alone, there would be no room for the Scribes and doctors of the Law, who earned their living by teaching it. If it be true that the Almighty scorned sacrifices of animals

and delighted only in purity of spirit and secret prayer, then the priests might close the doors of the sanctuary and change their callings; those who sold oxen, calves, sheep, lambs, kids, doves and sparrows would see their gains dwindle rapidly, and perhaps disappear entirely. If, in order to be beloved of God, it be necessary to change one's manner of living, and the washing of the cup and the paying of tithes be not sufficient, then, indeed, all the learning and authority of the Pharisees would amount to nothing. If, in a word, the Messiah should really come and declare the supremacy of the Temple to be at an end and the sacrifices to be of no avail, the stronghold of ritualism would immediately be reduced from its high station, and in course of time become a poor and obscure village, a desert place.

Jesus, who preferred fishermen, if they be but pure of heart and loving, to the members of the Sanhedrin, who sided with the poor against the rich, who esteemed children, with all their ignorance, more highly than the Scribes who had blinded themselves in studying the mysteries of the Scriptures, could not escape the hatred of Levite, merchant and doctor. The Temple, the Academy and the Bank were against Him. Reluctantly, but constrained by circumstances, when the victim should be ready they would call upon the Roman sword to sacrifice it to their prosperity.

For some time Jesus' life had been in danger. The Pharisees maintained, indeed, that ever since the last days of His sojourn in Galilee, Herod had been seeking Him that he might put Him to death. It was perhaps the knowledge of this fact that had led Him to Cæsarea Philippi, beyond the borders of that country, which, as He had prophesied, would witness His Passion.

Ever since His return to Jerusalem the Pharisees and Scribes had dogged His footsteps for the purpose of setting snares for Him and noting His every word. The anxious and envenomed leaders set a pack of spies upon Him who would presently become false witnesses against Him, and, according to John, certain guards had even received instructions to seize Him; but this they lacked the courage

to do. His scourging of the cattle-dealers and money-changers, the invectives He had poured out, before all men, against the Scribes and Pharisees, His allusions to the destruction of the Temple, caused the measure of the leaders' wrath to overflow. The time was short. Jerusalem was full of strangers and this Man was listened to by many. Disorder, an uprising or even open rebellion might result, for the provincials, who were present in large numbers, had the privileges and interests of the Temple less strongly at heart. Immediate measures must be adopted to prevent contagion, and to suppress the blasphemer seemed the best means of accomplishing this. There was no time to be lost, and the foxes of the altar and the shop, who had already consulted together in secret, determined to convoke the Sanhedrin for the reconciliation of Law and Murder.

The Sanhedrin was the assembly of all the leading men, the supreme council of the aristocracy that ruled in the capital. It was composed of priests, anxious to preserve the clientele of the Temple to whom they owed their power and their ample stipends; of Scribes, whose business it was to preserve the Law in all its purity and to pass on the tradition; of Elders, who represented the interests of an opulent and temperate middle-class.

All agreed that Jesus must be seized unexpectedly and put to death as a blasphemer and Sabbath-breaker. Nicodemus alone sought to plead His cause, but all combined to silence Him immediately. 'What do we do?' they said. 'For this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.' This was the reason of state, the country's safety upon which factious rulers always fall back, legalizing and idealizing by its means their defence of their own private interests.

Caiaphas, who in that year was High Priest, put an end to all hesitation by means of the maxim that, in the eyes of the world, has always sufficed to justify the immolation of the innocent. 'Ye know nothing at all,' he said, 'nor

consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.' In Caiaphas' mouth on this special occasion, and because of its hidden significance, this maxim was infamous, and, like everything else that was spoken in the Sanhedrin, hypocritical as well. But given a higher meaning, and transferred into the Absolute by substituting the word 'humanity' for 'nation,' the principle the head of this circumcised patriciate had laid down was one Jesus Himself had accepted in His heart, and which, in another form, was destined to become the crucial mystery of Christianity. Caiaphas was unaware, he who alone might enter the Holy of Holies and make an offering to Jehovah for the sins of the people, how close was the connection between his words, coarse in form and cynical in sentiment, and the thought of his Victim.

The thought—that only the just can redeem injustice, that only one who is perfect can make requital for the sins of brutes, that only one who is pure can cancel the debts of the base, that only God in His infinite generosity can expiate the faults which man has committed against Him, this thought which seems to man the height of insanity precisely because it is the height of divine wisdom—certainly did not illumine the perverted soul of the Sadducee when he flung into the midst of his seventy accomplices a sophism intended to stifle any possible remorse. Caiaphas who, together with the thorns of the crown and the sponge soaked in vinegar, was destined to be one of the implements of the Passion, certainly had no idea at that moment that he was bearing solemn though veiled and involuntary testimony to the divine nature of the tragedy that was about to be enacted. And yet the principle that the innocent may ransom the wicked, that the death of a single individual may suffice to save all, was not entirely foreign to the minds of the ancients. The heroic myths of paganism preserved the memory of and exalted self-immolation on the part of innocent beings. They told of Pylades who offered to suffer in the place of the guilty Orestes; of Macareus of the blood of Heracles who saved his brothers

lives with his own ; of Alceste, who accepted death that her beloved Admetus might escape the vengeance of Artemis ; of the daughters of Erechtheus, who gave up their lives that their father might be spared by Neptune ; of the old king Codrus, who sacrificed himself that his Athenians might be victorious ; of Decius Mus and his sons who, in the midst of battle, devoted themselves to the manes that the Romans might triumph over the Samnites ; of Curtius who, clad in full armour, jumped into the gulf for his country's good ; of Iphigenia, who offered her bosom to the knife that Agamemnon's fleet might reach Troy in safety. To purify Athens, which had been profaned by the assassination of the followers of Cylon, Epimenides resorted to sacrifices on the tombs ; on Cyprus, at Terracina and at Marseilles a man, who was regarded as the saviour of his people, was cast into the sea every year, in expiation of the sins of the community.

But when these sacrifices were voluntary they were for the redemption of a single being or of a small group of men ; when they were enforced they but added another crime to those they pretended to expiate : they were either examples of private affection or misdeeds due to superstition.

No man had as yet appeared who was willing to take upon himself the sins of all mankind, a God who had imprisoned Himself in flesh to save the human race and give it strength to ascend from animalism to holiness, from the humiliations of this world to the Kingdom of Heaven. The perfect One who takes upon Himself all imperfections ; the pure One who loads Himself with all that is infamous ; the just One who assumes the burden of all injustice, had appeared in the shape of a poor and hunted being, in the days of Caiaphas. He who must die for all, the Galilean labourer who troubles the peace of mind of the priests and of the rich at Jerusalem, is there on the Mount of Olives, but a short distance from the Sanhedrin. The seventy, who know not that at that moment they are obeying the will of Him they would persecute, decide to have Him seized before the beginning of the Passover. But, like all

tyrants, they are cowardly, and one consideration still causes them to hesitate—they fear the men who love Jesus. 'And the chief priest and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.' Fortunately for them their dilemma was solved for them on the morrow by the arrival of one of the Twelve themselves: Judas Iscariot, he who was in possession of the bag.

LXIII THE MYSTERY OF JUDAS

Two beings only in this world have ever known the secret of Judas: Christ and the traitor himself.

Sixty generations have speculated about it, but the Iscariot still remains unexplained, although the number of his disciples on earth is incalculable. He is the only human mystery to be found in the Gospels. It is easy to understand the fiendishness of the Herods, the bitter hatred of the Pharisees, the envenomed spite of Annas and Caiaphas, and the cowardly weakness of Pilate; but the explanation of Judas' abominable action remains hidden. The four historians have told us too little about him and about the motive that induced him to sell his King.

'Satan,' they say, 'entered into him.' But these words are merely the definition of his crime. Evil took possession of his heart, and this suddenly. Previously, perhaps not even at the moment of the supper at Bethany, Judas had not been in the power of his enemy. But why did he so suddenly yield to this power? Why did Satan choose to enter into him instead of one of the others?

Thirty pieces of silver are but a small sum, especially to one who was avid of riches. In our money they would not be worth one hundred lire,[1] and even admitting that their real value, or what economists call their purchasing power, was ten times greater at that time, it does not seem possible that the sum of one thousand lire could have sufficed to induce one whom his companions described as

[1] Equal to £4 in normal rate of exchange.

miserly to commit the most revolting act of perfidy history has ever recorded. It has been said that thirty pieces of silver were the price of a slave ; but a passage quoted from Exodus states that if an ox gored a slave, either male or female, the owner of the ox had to pay the sum of thirty shekels in compensation for the accident. The present case, however, was so peculiar that at that moment the learned members of the Sanhedrin certainly did not pause to ask themselves whether they were acting with scrupulous regard to precedent.

The strongest argument in favour of the tradition lies in the nature of the office Judas filled among the Twelve. One of their number had formerly been a receiver of customs, and Matthew might well have claimed the privilege of holding what little money the community needed for its support ; but instead of Matthew we find this Iscariot in possession of the funds derived from offerings and gifts. The mere handling of money, even though it belong to others, besmirches. It is not, then, to be wondered at that John accused Judas of stealing : ' . . . he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.'

Nevertheless we cannot but wonder that one who was fond of money should have remained so long in such poor company. Had he wished to live by thieving he would have chosen a more fitting and lucrative post ; and had he really needed those thirty miserable pieces of silver, could he not have obtained them in some other way—even by making off with the bag rather than by this proposal to the priests to sell his Master ?

These very obvious reflections concerning so extraordinary a crime have induced many, even in the early days of Christianity, to seek other motives for the infamous bargain. One heretical sect invented the fable that Judas, knowing it to be the will of both Father and Son that Jesus should be brought to suffer death by an act of betrayal, in order that the great expiation might lack no element of pain, had sorrowfully taken the eternal infamy upon himself, that all things foretold might be accomplished. Thus he had been but the necessary and voluntary instrument

of Redemption, and, according to these heretics, was both a hero and a martyr, deserving veneration rather than condemnation.

Others maintained that Iscariot, who loved his own people, and looked forward to seeing their liberty restored to them, or who, perhaps, sympathized to a certain extent with the Zealots, had joined Jesus in the belief that He was indeed the Messiah for whose coming the masses were then hoping—the coming of the king who would avenge and restore Israel! And that when he was finally convinced by the language of Jesus Himself that here was a Messiah of a very different sort, in the wrath of his bitter disappointment he delivered the Christ into the hands of His enemies. But this fancy, which has no foundation either in the canonical or apocryphal Scriptures, can in no wise serve to exonerate him who sold Christ. He might have left the Twelve and gone in search of more congenial companions, of companions more like himself, of whom, as we have seen, there were plenty at that time.

Others, again, have declared that the true explanation of Judas' conduct is to be found in his loss of faith. He had once believed firmly in Jesus, but could do so no longer. Christ's prophecies concerning the fast approaching end, the threatening attitude of the metropolis, the delay in any conclusive manifestation of triumph, had ended by robbing him of all faith in Him whose Disciple he had been. He saw no signs of the coming of the Kingdom, but death, he knew, was fast approaching. Perhaps, mingling, as we know he did, with the common people, some rumour had reached him of the high assembly's intentions, and he trembled lest the Sanhedrin should not be satisfied with a single victim, but should condemn all who had been the companions of Jesus. Overcome by fear, that is to say by Satan disguised as fear, he immediately set about ensuring his own safety by an act of betrayal. Unbelief and cowardice would thus have been the shameful causes of his ignominy.

An Englishman, famed as an opium-eater, thought out another paradoxical excuse for the traitor. Judas believed,

he declared ; he believed all too fervently indeed. And so thoroughly convinced was he that Jesus was really the Christ that he sought, by placing Him in the grip of the law, to force Him to make His Messiahship manifest. So strong was his trust that he could not believe Jesus would indeed suffer death. And even should this come to pass, Judas knew that He would soon rise again, to reappear, seated on the right hand of His Father, as King, not only of Israel, but of the whole world. In order to hasten the coming of that great day whereon the Disciples' devotion would at last be rewarded, Judas, sure of his Divine Friend's intangibility, wished to force His hand, and, by placing Him face to face with them He was destined to overthrow, afford Him the opportunity of proving Himself the true Son of God. Judas' act was not a betrayal, but a mistake due to the fact that he had not grasped the true meaning of his Master's teachings. It was, therefore, neither greed of money, the thirst for vengeance, nor cowardice that led him to betray, but merely imbecility.

There have been some who have clung to the idea of vengeance. No one betrays who does not hate. Why should Judas hate Jesus ? They go back to the feast in the house of Simon, and to the weeping woman's precious nard. Jesus' reproof must have angered His Disciple, who had perhaps already been taken to task for his meanness and deceit. To the rancour caused by the reproach was soon added envy, which is a weed that flourishes perennially in base hearts, and as soon as he perceived the possibility of vengeance, he betook himself to the palace of Caiaphas.

But can he really have believed his denunciation would cause the death of Jesus ? Or did he suppose they would merely scourge Him and forbid His preaching ? The end of the story of Judas would point to the conclusion that he was overwhelmed by the condemnation of Jesus, and that he saw therein the terrible and unexpected consequence of his kiss. Matthew describes his despair in words that lead one to suppose he fully sensed the horror of what he had brought about. The coins he had received burnt his flesh, and when the priests refused to take them back, he

flung them on the floor of the Temple. Even this act of restitution failed to bring him peace, and he hastened forth to hang himself that he might die on the same day with his Victim. Such violent remorse, driving him so relentlessly to seek death, is suggestive of the terrors of unexpected and sudden revelation.

The mystery that surrounds Judas becomes ever more impenetrable, the conjecturings of the unconvinced notwithstanding. But we have not yet invoked the testimony of Him who, better than any other, better even than Judas himself, knew the true secret of the betrayal. Only Jesus, who saw into the very depths of Iscariot's soul as He sees into the souls of all, and who had known from the beginning what he would do, may say the last word.

Jesus chose Judas to be one of the Twelve, and, like the others, a bearer of the Good Tidings. Would He have chosen him, would He have kept him with Him, close beside Him, have tolerated him so long at His board had He deemed him an irredeemable criminal? Would He have trusted him with what He held most dear, with the most precious thing in the world—the preaching of the Kingdom of God?

Down to the last day, the last evening, Jesus had always treated Judas as He treated the others. To him also, as to the others, He gave His body in the form of bread and His blood in that of wine. Judas' feet also—those very feet that had borne him to the house of Caiaphas—were washed and dried by the hands that, on the morrow, and with Judas' connivance, would be pierced with nails. And when, advancing amidst the flashing of blades and in the red glow of lanterns, Judas, in the deep shadow of the olive grove, kissed the face that was still wet with the blood it had sweated, Jesus did not cast him from Him, but said:—

'Friend, wherefore art thou come?'

Friend! It was the last time Jesus would address him, and even at that moment He could find no other word than that familiar one, than the word He had spoken to him at the beginning. To Jesus, Judas was not the man of darkness, coming to Him amidst the shadows to consign

Him to His captors, but the friend, the same who, but a few hours since, had sat at meat with Him, before the dish of lamb and bitter herbs, and whose lips had touched His cup ; the same who so often, as they had sat resting in the shade of a wall or of clustering trees, had listened with the others, as His Disciple, companion, brother, to the mighty words of promise. At the Last Supper Jesus had said : ' Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.' But now that the traitor stands before Him and the betrayal is consummated, now that Judas has added to the perfidy of his betrayal the outrage of a kiss upon the mouth of Him who commanded man to love his enemies, the sweet, familiar, divine word returns to His lips : ' Friend, wherefore art thou come ? '

The testimony even of his Victim does but increase our perplexity instead of lifting the veil that hides this awful secret. He knew that Judas was a thief, yet He trusted him with the bag ; He knew that Judas was wicked, and He trusted him with a treasure infinitely more precious than all the gold of the universe ; He knew that Judas would betray Him, yet He admitted him to participation in His divinity by offering him the sop of bread and the cup of wine ; He saw Judas guiding His captors, yet He spoke to him once more as before, as always, in the holy name of friendship.

' It had been good for that man if he had not been born ! ' Rather than words of condemnation these may perhaps be words of sorrow at the thought of a fate that cannot be avoided. Judas may have hated Jesus, but nowhere is there any indication that Jesus shrank from Judas. For He knew that the shameful bargain was necessary, as the weakness of Pilate, the wrath of Caiaphas, the insults of the soldiers and the wood of the cross were necessary. He knew that Judas was bound to do this thing, and He did not cry out upon him, as He did not curse the rabble that clamoured for His death or the hammer that nailed Him to the cross. Only one request did He make of Judas when He said : ' What thou doest, do quickly.'

The mystery of Judas is bound by a double knot to that of the Redemption, and to us who are the 'least' it must remain a mystery.

No analogy can enlighten us. Joseph also was sold by one of his brothers whose name was Judah like Iscariot—was sold to the Ishmaelite merchants for twenty pieces of silver. But Joseph, a figure of Christ in the flesh, was not sold to his enemies, was not sold to be put to death. And in compensation for the wicked deed done against him, he became so rich as to be able to enrich his father also, and so generous as to be able to forgive his brethren.

Jesus was not only betrayed, He was sold as well. He was betrayed for a price, sold for a paltry sum, bartered away for coin which can be spent. He was an object of exchange, goods paid for and delivered. Judas, the master of the bag, the treasurer, did not stand forth merely as the accuser, did not offer himself as the executioner, but presented himself as a trader, as one who trafficks in blood. The Jews, who were learned in all matters concerning blood, who were daily engaged in slaughtering and quartering, who were butchers in ordinary to the Most High, were Judas' first and last customers. The sale of Jesus was the first transaction this improvised trader handled—a meagre enough transaction, but nevertheless a real business matter, a legal bargain between buyer and seller, a verbal contract, but one that was honestly fulfilled on both sides.

Had Jesus not been sold something would have been wanting to complete the ignominy of the expiation; had the price been high, had it been three hundred shekels instead of thirty, had it been in gold instead of silver, the ignominy would have been less; not much less, indeed, but somewhat. Since the beginning of time it had been foreordained that He should be bought for a price, no matter how mean, that in some way money might enter into the transaction. In order that the infinite value might be revealed as superhuman but communicable, it was necessary that it be exchanged for a minimum value, for a value in metal which is of no value. Did not He who was sold do the same, He who would buy back with the blood

of one Victim all the blood that had been shed on earth from Cain to Caiaphas ?

And had He been sold as a slave, as in those days so many soul-encompassing bodies were sold in the market-places ; had He been sold as something that could bring profit, as human capital, as a living instrument of labour, the ignominy would have vanished almost entirely, and Redemption been postponed. But He was sold as is the innocent creature the butcher buys to slaughter and sell again, in pieces, to the eaters of flesh. That sacred immolator Caiaphas never again sacrificed so great a victim. For nearly two thousand years that Victim has nourished the Christians, yet It is still intact, and Its devourers are not yet filled.

Each one of us has paid his part—his infinitely small part—to buy from Judas that Victim that cannot be consumed. We have all contributed towards the tangible sum that was the price of the Liberator's blood ; Caiaphas was but our agent. The potter's field which was purchased with the price of blood is our inheritance, belongs to us. And that field has grown mysteriously, has spread so that it now covers half of the face of the earth, and from north to south there have risen upon it whole cities, thickly populated, clean, well-paved, well-lighted cities, with their innumerable shops and brothels. And that the mystery might become ever deeper, the coins of Judas, multiplied a thousandfold by all the acts of treachery and all the many transactions of the centuries, and above all, by the accumulation of interest, are become incalculable. To-day, indeed, as the statisticians, those augurs of modern times, can testify, the whole Temple could not contain the coins those thirty pieces have engendered since the day when in a delirium of remorse they were flung upon the pavement by the man who sold his God.

LXIV THE MAN WITH THE PITCHER

Having fixed and paid the price, the purchasers will not wait for consignment. Before the Feast, had they agreed.

The great Feast of the Passover occurred on Saturday, and this was Thursday.

Jesus had but one more day of freedom—the Last Day. Before leaving His friends, the same who this very night will forsake Him, He wished to sit once more at the peaceful board, and once more dip His bread into the same dish with them. Before His face is defiled with spit by the Syrian soldiers and the Jewish rabble, He will kneel and wash the feet of them who, until death, must travel the roads of the earth, telling the story of His end. Before His Blood shall flow from hands, feet, and side, He will give it to drink to them who must be one soul with Him until the end. Before suffering upon the Cross, He desired to drink once more the juice of the grape out of the same cup which He gave unto His companions. For this is the Last Supper, on the eve of His death, and it must be a foretaste of the banquet in the new Kingdom.

The morning of Thursday came, it was the first day of unleavened bread, and His Disciples said to Him :—

'Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the Passover?'

The Son of Man is less fortunate than the fox, for He has no dwelling-place. The home at Nazareth He has left for ever; the house of Simon at Capernaum, which in early days was as His own, is far away; and that of Mary and Martha at Bethany, where He had once been as the master, is now beyond reach. Here in Jerusalem He has enemies only, His friends are ashamed to acknowledge Him—Joseph of Arimathea will not receive Him as His guest until the next night, but then it will be in the dark sepulchre where only worms may feast.

But it is the right of every man condemned to death to have his last wishes granted. All the houses of Jerusalem are His. The Father will give Him the one best adapted to hide the last moments of joy this hunted One will experience; and so Jesus sends forth two of His Disciples with this mysterious order :—

'Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever

he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples ? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared : there make ready for us.'

It has been thought that the owner of this house was a friend of Jesus, and that all had been arranged beforehand between them. This is a mistake, however, for had such been the case Jesus would have stated the man's name and have sent His Disciples directly to him, instead of telling them to follow a man with a pitcher.

Many were those who, on that morning of the feast, were going up to the pool of Siloam with their water-pitchers ; but the Disciples were not to choose ; they were to follow the first man who should come towards them. They certainly did not know him, else they would have stopped the man instead of following him to see where he entered. His master, if he has a servant, could not be of the very poor, and in his house, as in the houses of the rich, there would certainly be a room where several could sit at meat. And this man must know, or at least must have heard, who the Master is ; for in these days Jerusalem had talked of nothing else than His preaching. The message is such that the ' goodman ' cannot refuse : ' The Master saith, My time is at hand.' The time which is now His is that of Death. Who would turn a doomed man from his door, one seeking to still his hunger for the last time ?

The Disciples went forth : they found the man with the pitcher, followed him into the house, talked with the ' goodman ' and prepared everything that was necessary for the supper—the lamb roasted on the spit, the round cakes of unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, the red sauce, the wine of thanksgiving and the hot water. In the room set apart they arranged the couches and cushions around the table, spread the fine white cloth and placed upon it a few plates, the candelabra, the jugs of wine, and the cup, one cup only, from which all would drink. They forgot nothing ; these two men were well acquainted with arrangements of this sort. As children in their fathers' houses,

that the lake reflected, they had watched with wide-eyed interest the preparations for this most intimate of all festivals. Nor was this the first time they had eaten the Passover together since they had dwelt with Him they loved. But on this day, which was the last (perhaps, indeed, the awful truth had at last entered their closed spirits), for this supper which was the last, all thirteen, still in the flesh, would partake of together; for this Passover, which was the last for Jesus and also the final true Passover of ancient Judaism (for the new covenant would soon be in force for all men); for this festive banquet, at once a living memory and a warning of approaching death, the Disciples performed their humble household tasks with a sense of emotion that was new to them, with that calm and thoughtful cheerfulness that affects almost to tears.

At sunset the other ten arrived with Jesus in their midst, and all sat down around the table. No one spoke; each was weighed down with forebodings he feared to see reflected in the eyes of his companions. They recalled the supper in the house of Simon that had been almost like a funeral ceremony; the odour of the nard, the woman who wept silently, the words Jesus had spoken; His utterances of these last days, His repeated predictions of infamy and of the end, the signs of odium they saw increasing around them, and the now manifest indications of the conspiracy that was about to come forth from the shadow, bearing its torches aloft.

Two of their number—but for opposite reasons—were more oppressed, more deeply afflicted than the rest; the two who would not see the end of another day; the two about to die—Christ and Judas—He who had been sold and he who had sold, the Son of God and the offspring of Satan.

Judas had arranged everything. He had the thirty pieces of silver upon his person, tied up tightly that they might not rattle, and no one could take them from him. Nevertheless his mind was not at ease. The enemy had entered into him, but perhaps he who had loved Christ was not quite dead as yet. To see Him thus in the midst of His friends, outwardly composed but wearing the look of

affliction of one who bears alone the weight of a secret, the knowledge of a crime, of a betrayal ; to see Him still free, surrounded by loving friends, still alive, with the blood still coursing through His veins beneath the thin, transparent skin ! . . . But the purchasers would wait no longer ; the signal he would give that very night, and they were expecting Judas. But what if Jesus, who certainly knew all, should denounce him to the other eleven ; what if, to save the Master, they should seize him, bind him, kill him perhaps ? He was beginning to realize that by sending Christ to His death he was not saving himself from the death he so dreaded and that was so near at hand.

Like deep shadows such thoughts were reflected on Judas' face. He watched with consternation the final preparations, and casting a swift glance at Jesus, looked into those searching eyes, veiled with the tender sadness of parting, as if hoping to read in their depths the revocation of an impending fate.

Presently the voice of Jesus broke the silence, saying :

'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer : For I say unto you I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'

No words spoken by Jesus to His friends had ever been laden with such deep affliction as were these. What longing they betrayed for the dawning of the day of perfect union, for the renewal in a higher sphere of the ancient rite ! They knew that He loved them, but how deeply their poor, troubled hearts had never realized until this hour. This supreme hour, He well knew, would be His last sweet time of rest until death should have released Him, yet He 'desired it with desire,' with the yearning wherewith one desires what is most desirable, what one has desired longest : with the fervour only the impassioned, the ardent and the lover know, those who fight for the light of victory and those who suffer for a high reward. It had been His ardent wish to eat this Passover with them. He had eaten other Passovers with them before, and had sat at meat with them a thousand times, in their boats, in the houses of friends, of strangers, of the rich, by the roadside, on mountain

pastures, in the shade of rocks and of green branches. Yet He had long desired ardently to eat this supper—the Last Supper—with them.

The skies of happy Galilee, the winds, now hushed, of a springtime that is past, the sun that shone on the last Passover, the branches that were strewn before Him but yesterday—did He still remember these things? Had they ever been? What He sees now are His early friends, whose number His betrayal will reduce, whom fear will scatter, but who surround Him at that moment, in the same room, seated at the same table, all closely united not only by a sense of impending suffering, but also by the light of a superhuman certitude.

Up to this moment He had suffered indeed, but not for Himself—rather from His ardent longing for this evening hour, heavy with the fatal atmosphere of sad farewells. And in His confession of love Jesus' face, so soon to be smitten by brutal hands, was suffused with a light of majestic sadness that strangely resembled joy.

LXV THE WASHING OF FEET

On the point of being torn from His loved ones, Jesus wishes to give them a final proof of His affection. He has always loved them, ever since they have dwelt together, loved them one and all, even Judas; He has loved them with a love surpassing all others, with a love so overwhelming that their narrow hearts have not always been able to hold it all. But now that He is about to leave them, that He will not again be in their midst until death shall have transhumanized Him, the affection He has not yet expressed in words melts within Him and overflows in a sadness that is all tenderness.

He is still the head of His family, but at this supper He will show Himself more benevolent than a father, more humble than a servant. He is a King and He will stoop to perform the office of a slave; He is the Master and He will set Himself below His Disciples; He is the Son of God and He will deign to act the part of the most despised

among men ; He is the first and He will kneel before His inferiors as were He the least. He has so often told these proud and jealous friends of His that the master must serve his servants, that the Son of Man is come to serve, that the first must be as the last. But as yet His words have failed to penetrate their souls, for they still dispute amongst themselves concerning their priority and precedence.

Action has greater power than words upon the uncultured ; and Jesus is prepared to repeat one of His most vital precepts in the symbolical form of humiliating service.

' He riseth from supper,' John tells us, ' and laid aside his garments ; and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poureth water in a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.'

Only a mother or a slave would do what Jesus did on that night. A mother may do it for her little ones but for no one else ; the slave for his masters and for no one else. A mother does it gladly because she loves ; the slave with resignation because he must obey. But the Twelve are neither the children nor the masters of Jesus. As the Son both of man and of God, He combines in Himself a double sonship that raises Him above all earthly mothers ; as the King of a future kingdom that is more legitimate than all others, He is the still unrecognized Master of all masters.

Yet He is willing to wash the feet of His twelve Disciples, if in acting thus He may impress upon those stubborn hearts, that are swelled with pride, a truth His lips have so often uttered in vain : ' Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased ; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.'

' So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them : Know ye what I have done to you ? Ye call me Master and Lord ; and ye say well ; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily

verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord ; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.'

Jesus was leaving them not only the memory of an act of condescension and humility but also an example of perfect love. 'This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.'

This act, so profoundly significant in its apparent servility, stood for purification as well as love. 'He that is washed,' Jesus told them, 'needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit : and ye are clean, but not all.'

Their sluggish natures notwithstanding, the Twelve had some right to the benefits of this washing. For weeks and months they had trod the dusty and muddy ways of Judea, following One who alone gave life. And after His death they must, for years upon years, travel longer and more unfamiliar ways in lands whose very names they have never heard ; and the dust and dirt of strange countries, soaking through their footgear, will contaminate the feet of these foreign pilgrims who are come to repeat the summons of Him who was crucified.

LXVI TAKE AND EAT

In appearance the Thirteen seem assembled for the purpose of celebrating the ancient convivial rite established in memory of the deliverance of their fathers out of Egyptian bondage. They are grouped thus around the table, redolent with the odours of roasted meat and wine, thirteen common but devout men, waiting to celebrate some solemn family festival. But only in appearance ; for this is a last farewell before separation and departure. Two of the Thirteen—He who bears God in His heart, and he who harbours Satan—will die, each a terrible death, before the coming of another night. The others, to-morrow, will scatter as do the reapers at the first signs of approaching storm.

But this supper, which is the viaticum of an end, is at the same time the celebration of a glorious beginning. The observance of the Jewish Passover is to be transformed by means of these thirteen Jews into a ceremony of an immeasurably higher character, something universal, unequalled and ineffable—into the great Christian Mystery.

The Passover of the Israelites is but a feast in memory of their deliverance out of Egypt. That victorious flight from an abject state of bondage, accompanied as it had been by so much that was miraculous, and made possible by the openly manifested favour of the Almighty, has never been forgotten by a people destined, nevertheless, again to bear the yoke of slavery and to submit to the shame of other deportations. In perpetual memory of this precipitous Exodus and annual festival was instituted that took the name of the Passover—*Pesach*—Easter. It consisted of a sort of banquet that symbolized the hasty repasts of the fugitives. A lamb or kid, roasted before the fire, that is to say, cooked in the easiest and quickest way; bread without yeast, for there was no time to wait for the dough to rise. They must eat in haste, staff in hand, with their loins already girded and shoes upon their feet, as were they about to set forth on a journey. The bitter herbs represent the coarse, wild vegetables the fugitives snatched by the way to still the pangs of hunger on that interminable pilgrimage. The reddish sauce wherein they dip their bread is to remind them of the bricks the Jewish slaves had been forced to bake for Pharaoh. The wine is an addition; it represents the joy of escape, the promise of the longed-for vine, the intoxication of gratitude to the Almighty.

On this occasion Jesus does not alter the order of the ancient feast. After a prayer He allows the cup of wine to pass from hand to hand while He invokes the name of God. Then He gives each his portion of bitter herbs and again fills the cup from which each takes a sip.

How did that wine taste in the mouth of the traitor, when Jesus, in the oppressive silence, pronounced those nostalgic yet hope-inspiring words that are not for Judas

but only for such as may hope to partake of the eternal banquet of Paradise ?

'Drink ye all of it. . . . I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'

A sorrowful farewell, but at the same time the confirmation of a solemn promise. Perhaps this confirmation was all they heard, and the eyes of these men, who had known only poverty, may have been dazzled for an instant by a vision of the vast, celestial banquet. They believed they would not have long to wait. After the next harvest, when the juice had fermented and the sweet, new wine been poured into the casks, the Master would surely return, as He had promised, and summon them to the marriage of heaven and earth, to the eternal banquet. 'We are men past the prime of life, elderly men, men already approaching old age,' they reasoned. 'Should the bridegroom tarry He would not find us amongst the living, and His promise would be but a mockery to them who have believed.'

Comforted by the certainty of a speedy and glorious reunion, they chant in chorus, as is prescribed, the psalms of the first thanksgiving, a song of praise to the Father of Him who has but now been acting as their servant.

'Tremble thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob ; which turned the rock into a standing water, and flint into a fountain of waters. . . . He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill ; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.'

With what happy conviction do they pronounce these ancient words that, at that moment, assume a new meaning ! They also are needy, but they will be raised up out of the dust of misery through the intercession of the Son of God, who will come again ; they also are poor, but He will soon lift them out of the dunghill of beggary and make them masters of riches that cannot pass away.

Then Jesus, who is aware of the imperfection of their comprehension, takes the bread which is upon the table,

and after He has blessed and broken it, passes a morsel to each, again uttering the words of eternal truth :—

'This is my body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of me.'

Then He will not return as soon as they had hoped ? The days of His appearance after the Resurrection will be few : His second advent will be so long delayed that they may lose all memory of Him and of His death !

'Do this in memory of me,' and Jesus may have added : 'A morsel of bread eaten at the common board, with others who are waiting in like manner, will be the emblem of the new brotherhood. Whenever ye shall break bread, not only will I be present in your midst, but by its means ye shall become closely united to Me. For as this bread is broken by My hands, so shall My body be broken by Mine enemies ; and as this bread which ye eat to-night shall sustain you until to-morrow, so shall My body which, by My death, I bestow upon all men, sustain all who believe in Me until that day whereon the inexhaustible granaries of the Kingdom shall be thrown open, and ye shall be as lambs in the light of your Father to whom ye shall be re-united. It is therefore not only a memory that I leave unto you. In a shape that is mystical but none the less real, I shall be present in every smallest particle of bread that is consecrated to Me ; and this bread is the food of life indispensable to the soul. Thus shall My promise be fulfilled to be with you until the end of time.

'But to-night eat of this unleavened bread mixed by the hand of man, made of water and of flour ; of this bread that My hands, which are still warm, have broken, and My love has changed into Mine own flesh, that it may be your food for all time.

'Verily it is pleasant to eat good bread with one's friends —to eat the white crumb with its well-browned crust. Many times have ye begged for it at the doors of the poor in My company, and in My name must ye continue to beg for it until the end of your days. There will be given you mouldy lumps which even the dogs will refuse, stale bread, dry crusts old people or children have flung on the hearth-

stone. But ye are acquainted with want; ye have gone supperless, and ye know the pale face of poverty. Ye are healthy, and have the strong jaws of men who eat hard bread. Ye will not lose courage even though there be no room for you at the table of the rich.

'But infinitely sweeter is it to the heart of Him who loves you to change the bread which is the product of the hard earth and of hard labour into that body which is an eternal offering on your behalf, that each day will come down from heaven, as a visible vehicle of grace.

'Remember the prayer I have taught you: Give us this day our daily bread. Your bread of to-day and for ever is this My body. Whosoever shall eat of My body, which every morning for countless centuries shall be changed into transubstantiated bread, will never know hunger. But whosoever shall refuse it, will never, in all eternity, be free from hunger's pangs.'

When they had eaten of the lamb, the bread and the bitter herbs, Jesus filled the cup for the third time and handed it to him who sat next to Him, saying:—

'This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.'

His blood, mixed with sweat, had not yet dropped on the ground beneath the olives, and from the nails of the Cross the big drops had not yet fallen on the summit of Golgotha; but so strong was His desire to give life with His own life, to redeem all the world's sufferings with His own, to transmit part, at least, of His wealth to His direct heirs, to give Himself entirely to the objects of His affection, that He regarded the sacrifice as already accomplished and the gift as possible. If the bread be the body, then the blood is, in a certain sense, the soul.

'But flesh with the life[1] thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat,' the Lord had said to Noah. With blood, which is the visible sign of life, the God of Abraham and of Jacob had established the covenant with His chosen people. When Moses had received the Tables

[1] In the Roman Catholic version the word *soul* is used instead of *life*.—Translator's Note.

of the Law he caused young bullocks to be sacrificed, half of whose blood was caught in basons and the rest sprinkled upon the altar. 'And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.'

But, after an experiment that had lasted for centuries, the Almighty had announced through His prophets that the old covenant was abrogated and that another was become necessary. The blood of animals sprinkled upon stubborn heads and lips that blasphemed had lost its efficacy. Other blood of a higher origin and a more precious essence there must be for this new covenant—the last covenant between the Father and His faithless children. He had tried in many ways to turn the faces of His first-born towards the narrow gate of salvation. The rain of fire and brimstone that fell upon Sodom, the purifying waters of the Flood, the captivity in Egypt and their sufferings in the desert had terrified them indeed, but had failed to reform them.

But now there is come a Deliverer who is at one and the same time more human and more divine than the ancient captain of Exodus. Moses also had saved a people, he had spoken upon the mountain-top and told of the promised land. But Jesus saves not only His own people, but all peoples; He does not engrave His laws upon stone, but in the hearts of men; and His promised land is not a region of rich, green pastures and of vines that bear grapes of enormous size, but a kingdom of holiness and joy eternal. Moses slew a man, but Jesus raises the dead; Moses changed water into blood, but Jesus, after changing water into wine at the marriage in Cana, now changes wine into blood, into His own blood at this melancholy banquet whereat He celebrates His nuptials with death; Moses died full of years and of glory, but Jesus will die young, scoffed at and insulted by those whom He loved.

The blood of bullocks, the impure blood of the beasts of the fields, of unwilling victims that belong to a lower order, is no longer of any avail. The new covenant is

being sealed to-night by the words of Him who offers His own blood, His own soul under the semblance of wine.

'This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.'

Not alone for the Twelve who are assembled there. They represent, in His eyes, the whole of humanity then living and to come. The blood He will shed to-morrow on the Hill of the Skull is real blood, pure and ardent blood, that will dry upon the Cross, leaving stains the tears of the whole of Christianity are not sufficient to cancel. But that blood at the Last Supper is the image of a soul that offers and dedicates itself, that the souls imprisoned in the bodies of men may become like unto it; that has bestowed itself alike upon them who have invoked it and them who have repelled it; that has suffered both for them who have welcomed it and for them who have cursed it. This baptism of blood following John's baptism with water and the Magdalene's baptism with tears, the baptism with the spit of Jews and Romans, this baptism with blood which in colour resembles that of fire foretold by the Fiery Prophet, that shall mingle with the tears the women will shed upon the bleeding body, is the supreme sacrament which He who is betrayed has bequested to His betrayers.

'For you I have broken the bread—the bread you pray for daily to My Father—as My body will be broken to-morrow, and I offer you My blood in this wine which I am tasting for the last time on earth. If ye will but do this always in memory of Me, ye will never again know hunger or thirst. The most excellent of all foods is wheaten bread, and of all drinks the juice of the grape, but the bread and wine which I have given you will satisfy your hunger and your thirst until the end, by virtue of My sacrifice and of the love that drives Me to seek death and that reigns beyond the grave.'

Ulysses advised Achilles to give bread and wine to the Achæi before the battle, saying that 'therein lay strength and courage.' To the Greek the strength of the arm is derived from bread, and the courage to kill from wine. Wine to make men drunk that they may destroy each other,

and bread to strengthen their arms that they may destroy and never be tired. The bread that Christ distributes does not strengthen the flesh alone, but the spirit, and His wine imparts the divine intoxication that is love, love which the Apostle will call (and thereby scandalize Ulysses' descendants) the madness of the Cross.

Judas himself has eaten of that bread and drunk that wine, has tasted of the body he has bartered away, has drunk of the blood he will help to spill, but he has not had the strength to confess his infamy, to fall weeping upon his knees at the feet of Him who would have mingled His tears with those of the traitor. It was at this hour that Judas' only friend warned him, saying :—

'Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.'

The Eleven, who presently will have the heart to leave Him to His fate in the hands of Caiaphas' soldiers, but who could never have conceived the idea of selling Him for money, shuddered at these words. Each looked into his neighbour's face with a new dread, with the terror of seeing thereon the pallor that accuses. And all, one after the other, asked :—

'Lord, is it I ?'

Even Judas, hiding his ever-growing confusion beneath a mask of indignant astonishment, succeeded in bringing out the words :—

'Master, is it I ?'

But Jesus, who on the morrow would refuse to speak in His own defence, will not accuse to-day, and does but repeat His terrible prophecy in more precise terms :—

'He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.'

And as all eyes are still fixed upon Him in the suspense of a painful doubt, He says a third time, with emphasis :—

'Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.'

Nor would He say more ; but having filled the cup a fourth time, as was the ancient custom, He gave it to them that all might drink. And again the thirteen voices joined in singing the great *Hallel* which marks the close of the

paschal rites. Jesus repeated with them the mighty words of the psalmists, that to Him were as a prophetic funeral oration before His entombment :—

'The Lord is on my side ; I will not fear ; what can man do unto me ? . . . They compassed me about like bees ; they are quenched as the fire of thorns. . . . I shall not die, but live. . . . The Lord hath chastened me sore : but he hath not given me over unto death. Open to me the gates of righteousness ; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord ! . . . The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. . . . Bind the sacrifice with cords even unto the horns of the altar. . . .'

The sacrifice is ready, and on the morrow the people of Jerusalem will behold a new altar of wood and iron. But the Disciples, confused and sleepy, failed, perhaps, to understand the allusions to death and victory contained in the ancient canticles.

When they finished the hymn they left the house. As soon as they were outside Judas disappeared into the darkness of the night. The Eleven who remained silently followed Jesus, who, as on other nights, set off in the direction of the Mount of Olives.

LXVII ABBA, FATHER

There was a garden up there with an oil-press that gave the place its name of Gethsemane. Here Jesus and the Twelve were in the habit of spending the night, either because the reek and noise of the great city were disturbing to these men who were accustomed to the fresh air and quiet of the country, or because they feared to be taken by surprise in the midst of an unfriendly population.

As soon as they reached the usual spot, Jesus said to His Disciples :—

'Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.'

So great was His distress, however, that He could not remain alone, but called the three He loved best—Simon Peter, James and John—to bear Him company. And when they were at a little distance from the others 'He

began to be sorrowful and very heavy,' and said to them :—

'My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death ; tarry ye here and watch with me.'

Whether or what they answered no man knows ; but they cannot have sought to comfort Him with words that come straight from the heart when one suffers for the sufferings of a loved one, for He withdrew from them also and went a little way off to pray alone.

Kneeling on the ground, He fell upon His face and prayed thus :—

'*Abba*, Father, all things are possible unto thee. . . . O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.'

He is alone now, alone in the darkness, alone in the midst of men and in the presence of God, and may show His weakness without shame. After all, He is human as well as divine—a man of flesh and blood, who breathes and moves, and knows that the machine which is His body will be stopped, that His flesh will be pierced, that His blood will flow upon the earth.

This is the second temptation. The Evangelist tells us that when Satan had tempted Jesus in vain in the desert, 'he departed from him for a season,' and until this moment he had left Him untroubled. But now, in this new desert, amidst these shadows where Jesus is alone, terribly alone, more alone than in that other desert where the wild animals ministered unto Him (whereas now, fierce, human animals who are learned and wear long capes are on their way to rend Him), in this awe-inspiring desert of gloom, Satan once more assails his Enemy. On that first occasion he had promised Jesus the kingdoms of the earth, victories and marvels ; had sought to ensnare Him with the promise of power ; but now he takes the opposite course and hopes to conquer Him through His weakness. The Christ who was at the outset of His career, in whom recent baptism had kindled high hope, who was full of confidence and love, had not yielded. But this Christ who has reached His end, whom those dearest to Him have forsaken, whom His own Disciple has betrayed, for whom

His enemies are seeking, may surely now be conquered by fear.

Jesus knows that He must die, knows the necessity for His death, knows that He came into the world in order to die, and give by His death life, and to confirm the truth of the higher life that has been prophesied. He has done nothing to avoid death, has accepted it willingly for the benefit of the faithful, of those who hate Him, of those yet unborn ; and He has warned His friends of His approaching death, has already bestowed upon them the bread of His body, the blood of His soul, and He has not the right to entreat His Father to withdraw the chalice from His lips, to postpone His end. He has written His words in the dust of the court and has immediately cancelled them ; He has written them in the hearts of a few, but He knows well how soon words graven upon the hearts of men are obliterated. If His truth is to remain on earth for all time and be made so clearly manifest that no man can ever forget it, He must write it with His blood, for all truths are of blood, and only with our heart's blood can we write them upon the world's pages in such a manner that neither the steps of men nor the waters of all the centuries can efface them. The Cross is the logical and necessary conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. He who brings love is at the mercy of hate, and hate may be overcome only by accepting its condemnation. For a price must be paid for everything —a higher price for good than for evil ; and the supreme good, which is love, must be paid for with the greatest evil known to man—murder.

But all that which, either faith or revelation, tells us of Christ's divinity, rises up against the idea that He might have yielded to temptation. If His previous knowledge of His body's end had indeed terrified Him, had He not had time to save Himself ? For several days He had known that they were preparing to seize Him, and He did not lack the means, even on that very night, of escaping from the dogs which were about to set their teeth in His flesh. He had but to set out, either alone or with the most devoted of His followers, along the road that leads to the Jordan,

and, travelling through Peræa by the least frequented ways, take refuge in the tetrarchate of Philip as He had done but a short time before, when He had fled from the vengeance of Herod Antipas. The Jewish police were so few in numbers and so ill-organized that He would hardly have been overtaken. His remaining, therefore, means that He does not wish to avoid death and its accompanying horrors. In the light of gross, human logic His act is equivalent to suicide—to a divine suicide carried out by the hand of another, and not dissimilar to the suicides of those heroes of antiquity who had recourse to the sword of a friend or a slave. He had delivered His message of truth, and nothing was now needed that they might remember it in all eternity, save to associate it with the awfulness of a death that can never be forgotten. And that blood, like some stimulating liquor, would arouse even the Disciples for all time.

But if this chalice which Jesus would have pass from Him be not fear of death, what then can it be? The betrayal by the Disciple whose hunger He had that very night appeased with His body and whose thirst He had quenched with His soul? Or the denial by that other Disciple on whom, since his confession at Cæsarea, the Master had rested His highest hopes? Or the desertion of all the others who would scatter like frightened lambs when the wolf has snatched a ewe? Or the pain of that vaster desertion, of His own people's refusal to acknowledge Him, the people from whom He was sprung but who now despise Him, and know not that the blood of Him who came to save will never be washed from their foreheads?

Or has He perhaps, in the deepest darkness of that night of vigil, foreseen the fate that awaits even those of His children who are farthest removed from Him by the centuries; the distress of the early saints; the dissensions that will arise amongst them; the desertions, martyrdoms and massacres; and, when the hour of triumph shall have come at last, the weakness of the very men who should lead the multitudes; the irreparable schisms: the dismemberment of the churches; the stubborn pride of heresies; the

multiplying of sects; the confusion spread by false prophets; the impudence of rebellious reformers; the pernicious frenzy of them who strain after the impossible; the simony and dissoluteness of them who, while they deny Him in their works, extol Him in word and gesture; the persecutions among Christians; the backslidings of the lukewarm and of the proud; the domination of new Pharisees, of new Scribes who will distort and betray His teachings; the false interpretations of His gospel by cavillers, captious disputants, visionaries, counters of syllables, weighers of the imponderable, separators of the inseparable, whose learned arrogance disembowels vital things and cuts them to pieces under the pretence of resurrecting them?

In a word, this would not be the evil by which He Himself is beset, but the evil others will commit, be they those men who are now alive and near at hand, or the yet unborn and far removed. He does not ask His Father to save Him from death, but for deliverance from the ills that threaten to descend, now or later, upon them who pretend to believe in Him. His sadness is not of fear but of love.

Probably no man will ever know the true significance of the words spoken by the Son to the Father, in the darkness and solitude of the Garden of Olives. A great French Christian has called the story of that night the 'Mystery of Jesus.' The Mystery of Judas is the only *human* mystery the Gospels contain; the prayer at Gethsemane is the most inscrutable divine mystery in the story of Christ.

LXVIII SWEAT AND BLOOD

And when Jesus had prayed He returned to seek the Disciples whom He had left waiting for Him. But all three were asleep. Huddled on the ground with their cloaks wrapped about them, Peter, James and John, the faithful, the chosen ones, had allowed sleep to overpower them. Their obscure dread, the repeated emotions of these last days, the oppressive melancholy that had brooded over the Supper, that had been enhanced by words of grave purport

and by mournful presentiments, had plunged them into that state of heaviness that is more like torpor than sleep.

The Master's voice aroused them. Ah, if we could but hear within ourselves the sound of that voice breaking the dark and awful silence!

'What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

Did they hear these words in their sleep? Did they rub their heavy eyes and reply, abashed? Startled thus from sleep, what answer could they make to this restless One who would never sleep again?

Once more Jesus withdrew, more sorrowful than before. Is the temptation against which He has just warned the sleepers in them only, or within Himself as well? Is it the temptation to escape, to deny Himself as others will deny Him? To meet violence with violence, to make others pay for His life with their own? Or to ask once more, with all the fervour of despair, that He may be delivered from peril?

Alone, more completely alone than ever, Jesus seeks absolute solitude, solitude like unto the desolation of the infinite. Until now He had been justified in believing that His dearest friends were watching near Him; but they also, exhausted by suffering, had forsaken Him in spirit before forsaking Him in the flesh. They had left Him alone. They had denied Him the last favour He would ever ask from those who had received so much. In exchange for His blood and soul, for all of His promises, for all His love, He had made but one request—that they withstand the temptation to sleep. And not even this did He obtain from them; yet at that very moment He was suffering and striving for them also, who slept. He who gave His whole being will obtain nothing in return. On this night of refusal every wish of His is repelled. Neither His Father nor man will grant His petitions.

Even Satan has faded away into the evil shadows that are his dwelling-place, and Christ is alone, utterly alone. Alone as those are perpetually alone who rise above all

others, who suffer in darkness that they may shed light on all. A hero is always the only being who is awake in a world of sleepers, he is like the pilot who watches over the ship in the solitude of sea and night while his companions rest.

Jesus is the most lonely of all the eternally lonely. Around Him all are asleep. Beyond the brook Cedron the sleeping city spreads its white mass, slashed with dark shadows, and at that hour, in all the houses of all the cities, blind and short-lived humanity sleeps. At that hour only the woman watches who expects the summons of man, only the thief crouching in the shadow with his hand upon his knife, only, perhaps, the philosopher who is pondering whether, after all, God be not.

On that night, however, the leaders of the Jews and their soldiers were not sleeping. They who should defend Jesus, they who, at least, might have offered Him some consolation, they who profess to love Him, who do love Him at times and in their own way, are sunk in slumber. But they do not sleep who hate Him, who will heap abuse upon Him and slay Him. Caiaphas does not sleep, and the only Disciple awake at that hour is Judas.

Until Judas shall come His Master will be alone with His sorrow which is like unto death. And from His loneliness He turns to His Father in prayer, and once more imploring words rise from His heart to His lips. The effort to suppress them, the struggle that convulses His being—for what is divine in Him gladly accepts that which it has desired, but the clay which encompasses it shudders—the inhuman and superhuman effort is crowned with victory in the end. He is in agony indeed, worn out and exhausted, but He has conquered.

The spirit has triumphed over flesh, but the body bleeds.

The strain of the supreme contest has shaken what is human in Jesus to its very depths, and He sweats as had He been subjected to some physical strain beyond the powers of endurance. His whole body is bathed in sweat, but it is not the same sweat that covers the forehead of one who works in the midday heat, who toils in the field or

tosses in a fever. He sheds the blood He has promised to mankind. Great drops of blood mixed with sweat fall upon the ground of the Garden of Olives—first offering of a conquered flesh. This is the beginning of deliverance, and as were He shedding His human nature through these drops of blood, His expiation is relieved of what weighed most heavily upon it.

A new prayer rises from those lips still wet with tears, blood and sweat :—

'O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. . . . Not as I will, but as thou wilt.'

Herein all cowardice is cast aside : the will, which is the individual being, surrenders in obedience, which alone ensures liberty in the Universal Being. He is no longer a man, but the Man ; the Man who is one with God, of the same essence as God. 'My wish is thine.' His victory over death is now assured, because He cannot die who is become divine unto the Eternal. 'Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.'

Jesus rises from His knees soothed, and returns to His Disciples. His sorrowful admonition had been of no avail. Overcome by fatigue, the three had again fallen asleep. This time, however, Jesus does not rouse them. He has found consolation such as they cannot give. Kneeling once more, He repeats to His Father those mighty words of renunciation :—

'Not my will but thine be done.'

God is no longer the servant of man. Heretofore man had demanded of Him the satisfaction of his personal desires, and had given songs and offerings in return. 'I desire property,' he would say ; 'I desire health, strength, fertile fields, the confusion of mine enemies.' But One is come who has subverted all things, who has reversed the old prayer : 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' Only a perfect union between the sovereign will of the Father and the submissive will of man, in the meeting and mingling of these two wills,

is beatitude. What matter it if the Father deliver me into the hands of them who will torture me and nail me upon two pieces of wood, like some accursed and evil beast? If I believe in the Father, I must know that my Father loves me better than I can love myself, and that He knows more than I can know. It follows then, that He can only desire what is best for me, even though in the eyes of men it appear the most terrible of evils; and I am working for my own good only when my will is that of my Father also. If His madness be infinitely more sane than our highest wisdom, any martyrdom He may impose must be incomparably more salutary than any earthly delight.

Let the Disciples sleep, let all mankind sleep—Christ is no longer alone. He is glad to suffer, glad to die; in the throbbing of His agony He has found peace.

Now, amidst the awful hush of night, He can listen for Judas' step with a composure akin to longing.

For a time He hears but the beating of His own heart, which is become so much quieter now that the abomination is drawing near. But presently the sound of the cautious, shuffling tread of many feet reaches Him from down below, and in the distance among the line of trees along the roadside, red patches of light appear and search the surrounding gloom. The servants of the assassins are climbing upwards, led by Iscariot.

Jesus draws nearer to His Disciples who still sleep, and calls to them in a voice that does not falter :—

'The hour is come. . . . Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.'

The other eight who were sleeping at a little distance had been roused by the noise, but had not time to answer the Master's call, for while He was still speaking the crowd had reached the spot and halted.

LXIX THE HOUR OF DARKNESS

It was the rabble that buzzed and gnawed about the Temple in the pay of the Sanhedrin, the lowest parasites of the sanctuary, hastily decked out as soldiers—the

sweepers and doorkeepers who, for this one night, had laid aside broom and keys and girded on the sword. They were many, 'a great multitude,' the Evangelist says, although they knew that they were going out against twelve, only two of whom had swords. Prophets, even when they are unarmed, fill the vulgar herd with terror.

This rabble had swarmed up the hillside with torches and lanterns as were they going to some nocturnal revel. The Disciples' pale faces and Judas' livid countenance seem to be twitching in the red, unsteady torch-light, while the face of Christ, stained with blood, but shining more brightly than the lights themselves, awaits the kiss of Iscariot.

'And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? . . . Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?'

Thou knowest well why he is come, knowest that this kiss is the first of Thy torments and the hardest of all to bear. That kiss is a signal to the soldiers, who are not familiar with the 'criminal's' appearance. 'Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him and lead him away safely,' he who trafficked in blood had told the miscreants he was leading; but it is also the most horrible profanation of that mouth which, in this earthly hell of ours, had spoken the language of paradise. Neither the spit and blows on mouth and cheek of the Jewish mob, nor the sponge dipped in vinegar that was held to His lips, will be so intolerable as was that kiss, from one who had called Him Master, had drunk from the same cup with Him and eaten from the same plate. At Judas' signal the boldest among the rabble approached this Enemy of their masters.

'Whom seek ye?' He asked.

'Jesus of Nazareth,' was the answer.

And the Lord replied: 'I am he.'

And hardly had He uttered the words 'I am he' than the pack fell back, cowed, either by the ring of the steady voice or the light shining from these divine eyes. But even at that moment it was of His friends' safety that Jesus thought.

'I have told you that I am he; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.'

At that moment, taking advantage of the soldiers' confusion, Simon Peter, who had suddenly rid himself both of his drowsiness and his fear, drew his sword and at one blow slashed off the ear of Caiaphas' servant, Malchus. Throughout that night Peter's conduct was inconsistent and contradictory. At the close of the supper he had sworn that never, no matter what might happen, would he forsake Jesus; later on, in the garden, he went to sleep and nothing could keep him awake; now he had suddenly undertaken —albeit rather tardily—to defend his Master to the extent of drawing blood; and a little later he will deny all knowledge of Him.

Simon's impulsive and absurd act met, however, with immediate censure, and Christ reproached him, saying :—

'Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. . . . The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?'

And He held out His hands to those nearest that they might bind them with the cords they had brought. While they were doing this their Prisoner accused them to their faces of cowardice, saying :—

'Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.'

He is the Light of the world which the powers of darkness would extinguish. But they will succeed only in hiding it for a space, as on a summer afternoon the sun may suddenly disappear behind a passing cloud, only to emerge again within the hour, higher and more glorious than before. The guards, who are eager to return in triumph and receive their reward, do not deign to answer, but instead start to descend the hill, dragging the Saviour after them by the rope. 'Then,' Matthew confesses, 'all the disciples forsook him and fled.' The Master had forbidden all defence; the Messiah, instead of fulminating against His enemies, held out His hands that they might bind them; the Saviour was helpless to save Himself. What, then, could they do? Only disappear that they might not also be dragged before

those mighty ones whom but yesterday they had dreamed of overthrowing, but who now, in the light of the torches, amidst the flashing of swords, loomed suddenly formidable and threatening. Only two followed, at a distance, the shameful procession, and we shall find them again in the courtyard of Caiaphas' palace.

The noise had awakened a young man who was sleeping in the house above the olive-press. With the curiosity of his youth, and without waiting to dress, he wrapped a sheet about him and came forth to see what was happening. The soldiers, mistaking him for one of the disciples who had not had time to escape, laid hands upon him, but the young man extricated himself from his sheet, which he left in their clutches, and ran away naked.

It has never been ascertained who this mysterious youth was who disappeared as suddenly into the night as he was come forth out of it. Perhaps it was Mark himself, the only one of the Evangelists who relates the incident; and were this the case, one might well draw out the conclusion that this involuntary witness of the beginning of the Passion, determined at that very hour to become, as he eventually did, its first historian.

LXX ANNAS

The Prisoner was immediately conducted to the palace of Annas, where his son-in-law, the high priest Caiaphas, also dwelt. Although the night was far spent and all concerned were aware that the Blasphemer would probably be in their hands by dawn, many of the judges were still asleep, and the trial could therefore not take place at once. The leaders were most anxious to get everything over before noon, that the people might not have time to make trouble nor Pilate time to reflect. However, it is not only the defenders of justice who may succumb to sleep, but also those who are bent on injustice. Some of the soldiers who had been to the Mount of Olives were, therefore, sent to arouse the chiefs of the Scribes and Elders, and meanwhile Annas, who had had little sleep that

night, determined to examine that false Prophet for his own satisfaction.

Annas, son of Seth, had been high priest for seven years, and although deposed in A.C. 14, when Tiberius came into power, he was still the true primate of the Jewish church. A Sadducee and the head of one of the most ambitious and opulent families belonging to the ecclesiastical aristocracy, he still dominated over his caste through his son-in-law, Caiaphas. At later periods five of his sons filled the office of high priest, and it was one of these, himself called Annas, who caused James, 'the Lord's brother,' to be stoned to death.

Jesus, then, was brought before old Annas. It was the first time the former Carpenter of Nazareth had ever found Himself face to face with the ecclesiastical sovereign of His people, with His greatest and most powerful enemy. Heretofore He had encountered only the subalterns, Scribes and Pharisees; now He stood before the master of them all, the supreme chief, and He was no longer the Accuser but the Accused. It was the first of the examinations He was to be subjected to on that last day. In the course of a few hours four different authorities would question Him with inquisitorial severity; two of whom were rulers of the Temple, Annas and Caiaphas, the two others earth's mighty ones, Antipas and Pilate.

Annas' first question is put with the intention of ascertaining who Jesus' Disciples are. Like all Sadducees, this old priest was also a wily politician; he cares little for the fables that have been circulated concerning the Messiahship; what he wishes to know is who the followers of this new Prophet are and from what classes they have been gathered, that he may form an accurate idea of the spread of this seditious disease. But Jesus looks him in the face and answers not. How can this trafficker in pigeons possibly have imagined that Jesus would betray those who had betrayed Him?

Presently Annas asks Him what His teachings are, and Jesus tells him that at this moment it is not for Him to answer:—

'I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why asketh thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.'

This is true enough. Jesus is not esoteric. Even though, at times, He may have spoken words to His Disciples that He has not repeated in public places, He has always exhorted them to proclaim from the house-tops what He has told them in the chamber. But Annas must have frowned at this answer that implied the expectation of a just trial, for one of the guards who stood near the Accused struck Him on the face, saying:—

'Answerest thou the high priest so?'

This blow is the first of the long series of affronts that will follow Christ to the foot of the Cross. But Jesus turns to His assailant, answering:—

'If I have spoken evil, bear witness to the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?'

The ruffian, disconcerted by his Victim's composure, can find nothing to say, and as Annas begins to realize that this Galilean is no common adventurer, his determination to be rid of Him increases. Perceiving, however, that he will not succeed in getting anything out of Him, he sends Him, still bound, to Caiaphas, that the mock trial may begin without delay.

LXXI THE CROWING OF THE COCK

Only two out of the eleven fugitives had repented of their cowardice and had followed Christ at a distance, trembling and keeping in the shadow of the walls, but never losing sight of the swinging lanterns that accompanied the Master to the murderers' den; these two were Simon Bar-jona and John the son of Zebedee.

John, who was known to some of Caiaphas' servants, entered the courtyard of the palace almost at the same moment as Jesus, but Simon, who was more timid, would not go in, but remained standing outside the gates.

Presently John, seeing that his companion was no longer beside him and having little wish to be left alone amidst such dangerous surroundings, went out again and brought him in, having first proved his identity, satisfying thus the suspicious damsel who was keeping the door. They passed, but the girl recognized Peter, and said to him :—

'Art thou not also one of this man's disciples ?'

But Peter answered almost with indignation :—

'I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. . . . I know him not.'

Then John and Peter sat down by the brazier that the servants had kindled in the courtyard, for although it was April, the night was chill. But the woman at the door was not convinced, and, coming over to the fire, she studied Peter fixedly for a time and finally declared :—

'And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.'

'And again he denied with an oath. I do not know the man.'

The girl went back to her post at the door, shaking her head, but one of the men who was present, and whose suspicions had been aroused by the very vehemence of Peter's denial, staring hard at him, said :—

'Surely thou also art one of them ; for thy speech betrayeth thee.'

Hereupon Peter again swore that it was not so, but a certain kinsman of that Malchus whose ear he had cut off put an end to the question by asking with an air of conviction :—

'Did I not see thee in the garden with him ?'

Peter, however, having lied twice already, could but continue to protest that they mistook him for another and that he was not one of the Man's friends.

It was at that very moment that Christ, bound and escorted by the soldiers, crossed the courtyard after His interview with Annas, on His way to the other side of the palace where Caiaphas dwelt. He heard Simon's words and turned and looked at him. For a single instant His eyes rested on His Disciple—those eyes wherein the very one who now denied Him had one day perceived the

luminous sign of divinity ; but for a single instant did He fix upon him that glance which was more compelling in its tenderness than in its wrath. But it went home to the troubled heart of the poor fisherman, and never, so long as he lived, would he forget the pain and gentleness of His Master's expression on that night of horror ; of that glance which, no matter how fleeting, said more and moved the soul more deeply than a thousand words.

' Thou also,' it said, ' thou who wast the first, in whom I placed my greatest trust, the most stubborn but also the most zealous, the most ignorant but also the most fervent of all ; even thou, Simon, the same who at Cæsarea didst proclaim my true name ; even thou who knowest all my words and hast so often kissed this mouth thou hast now declared thou knowest not ; even thou, Simon Barjona, deniest me before these who are preparing to slay me ! I spoke truly on that day when I called thee an offence and rebuked thee that thou didst not savour the things that are of God but only those that are of men. Thou couldst have vanished, as the others have done, if thou didst lack the strength to share with me this chalice of infamy which I have so often described to thee. Depart now, that I see thee no more until the day whereon I shall be truly free and thou shalt have been truly renewed through faith. Didst thou fear for thy life ? Then why art thou here ? And if thou fearest not, then why dost thou deny me ? Even Judas, at the last moment, was more loyal than thou hast been ; he came, indeed, in the company of mine enemies, but he did not pretend that he knew me not. Simon, Simon, I had warned thee that thou wouldst forsake me as the others have done, but now thou art even more cruel than the others. Nevertheless, my heart forgives thee. I am about to die, and as I forgive them who are the cause of my death, so also do I pardon thee, and I love thee as I have always loved thee ; but wilt thou ever be able to forgive thyself ? '

Beneath that gaze Simon bowed his head, and his heart pounded in his breast like a furious prisoner beating upon the door of his cell, nor would he have been able to repeat

his denial again. A scorching flame suffused his convulsed features. A spasm of sorrow and remorse laid hold upon him ; at one moment he felt as were he turning to ice, and at the next his whole body seemed to be melting away amidst encompassing flames. It was but now that he had declared he knew not Jesus, but at this moment he felt that he now knew Him indeed for the first time, for that glance had pierced him with the keenness of an archangel's sword.

With difficulty he rose to his feet and staggered to the gate ; but hardly was he gone forth into the silence and solitude of the dawn than a cock crowed afar off. That joyous, challenging cry was to Simon as the shout that rouses a sleeper from a haunting nightmare ; it was as the sudden memory of words heard in another life, as a return to his childhood's home, to the garden revealing itself in the morning light between the lake and the open country ; it was as the sound of a long-forgotten voice that illumines the past as lightning does the darkness. And amidst the waning shadows of the dawning day, a man went forth, staggering as one drunk with liquor, his head hidden by the cloak he had drawn over it and his shoulders heaving with sobbings of despair.

Weep, Simon Bar-jona, now that God has bestowed upon thee the blessing of tears. Weep for thyself and for Him ; weep for thy brother who betrayed Him ; weep for thy companions who have fled ; weep for the death of Him who is dying even for thy poor soul's good ; weep for all who shall come after thee and shall do as thou hast done, who shall deny their Redeemer and shall not repent ; weep for all backsliders, for all who deny the faith, for all who, like thee, shall say : ' I am not one of His disciples.' Who amongst us has not done, at least once, what Simon did ? How many of us are there who were born within His fold, whose childish lips called upon His name, who bent the knee before the image of His bloodstained face ; how many of us are there, I say, who, from dread of a scornful smile, have not said, at least once : ' I have never known Him ? '

Thou, O happy Simon, although thou art as the Stone,

sheddest all thy tears, and hidest thy disfigured and sorrowful face beneath thy cloak. Nor shall many days pass before the resurrected Christ shall kiss thee once again, for by thy tears shall thy faithless lips be cleansed for all eternity.

LXXII THE GARMENT THAT WAS RENT

Caiaphas' real name was Joseph. Caiaphas, a surname, is but another form of Cephas—the surname Simon bore—and it also signifies a stone. Between these two stones the Son of Man was sore pressed at the dawn of that fatal Friday. Simon Peter symbolizes His timid friends who failed to save Him; Joseph Peter, His enemies who were determined to suppress Him. Between the denial of Simon and the hatred of Joseph, between the head of the dying church and the head of the church to be, between these two stones, Jesus was as the life-giving kernel between two millstones.

The Sanhedrin was already assembled and was awaiting His arrival. Besides Annas and Caiaphas, who presided, there were John and Alexander and all the proud flower of the aristocracy. Ordinarily the Sanhedrin was composed of three-and-twenty ecclesiastics, three-and-twenty Scribes, three-and-twenty Elders, and two presidents—seventy-one members in all, about as many as were the Apostles of the Accused. But on this occasion a few were absent—those whose dread of an uprising outweighed their wrath against the Blasphemer; those few who were unwilling to either raise their finger in sign of condemnation or acquit Him openly. Nicodemus was certainly one of these—the Disciple of the Night—and also Joseph of Arimathea, whose piety would provide a burial-place for Jesus.

These absences notwithstanding, the number of those present was more than sufficient to lend a semblance of legality to the death sentence each member had already pronounced within himself. Each for a reason of his own, these delegates from the Temple, the School, and the Bank were impatient for the moment when they should be able to countersign the condemnation that represented their

vengeance. The great council-chamber, crowded with spectators, was like a shameful assembly of evil spirits. The dawning day seemed reluctant to relieve its gloom, yet its faint light had already robbed the flickering torches of their ruddy glow. Amidst these sinister shadows the judges sat waiting; old, massive, hook-nosed, frowning, irascible men, with piercing eyes and flowing, well-groomed beards. With their white mantles wrapped about them and their heads enveloped in linen draperies, they looked like an assembly of wizards waiting for a living victim. The crowd that filled the chamber consisted of the members' clients, guards, staff in hand, and the palace servants. The air was thick and heavy, as were it laden with something even more noxious than the breath of men.

Jesus, with His wrists still bound, was pushed forward into the midst of this kennel as those condemned *ad bestias* were shoved into the imperial arenas. Annas, still somewhat disconcerted by his recent interview with the Heresiarch, had hastily collected a handful of false witnesses among the rabble present, to be used in case of need, for the purpose of defeating any attempt at refutation or defence. This mockery of legal proceedings was opened by the roll-call of the prepared witnesses.

Two there were who declared they had heard Jesus speak the words :—

'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'

This was a serious accusation at that time and before that assembly. It was nothing less than an accusation of blasphemy. For the Temple of Jerusalem was, to these its dependants at least, the only and inviolable abode of the Almighty; and to threaten it was the same as to offer insult to its true Master, the Master of all Jews. But Jesus had never spoken these words, or at least not in that form and with that meaning. He had, indeed, predicted that no stone of the Temple would remain upon another, but had never said that He would bring about its ruin; and the allusion to a temple not built by the hands of man and rebuilt in three days was part of another discourse, wherein

He had spoken, figuratively, of His resurrection. So true was this that the false witnesses could not even agree as to an accurate interpretation of Jesus' utterances they had intentionally confused in repeating, and a lengthy dispute ensued. A word from Jesus, indeed, would have sufficed to convict and silence them, but His lips were sealed.

The high priest, dreading this obstinate silence, arose, saying to Jesus :—

'Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?'

But still Jesus held His peace.

So superhumanly eloquent are these silences of Jesus that they do but enrage His judges the more. He had returned no answer to Annas' first question, and now, before Caiaphas, He was silent, as He would also be before Antipas and Pilate. The things He could say He had already said repeatedly; what He could now add they would either fail to understand or seize upon and use against Him. Transcendental truths are, by their very nature, ineffable, and if at times, by sheer force of love, an inkling of them may be communicated, this will be received only by such as are already predisposed, and even to such it comes through the medium of the heart rather than through any fallacious and faulty discourse.

Jesus is silent, but He lets His great, calm eyes roam from one anxious, distorted face to another, and the judgment He passes on these mock judges is for all eternity. In an instant each one is weighed and condemned by that glance that pierces to the very soul. Are they then worthy, these corrupt and degenerated souls, these ill-born, outcast souls, will they ever be worthy to listen to His word? And could He ever, save by a miracle of servility, stoop to defend Himself before them?

The son of the midwife, the flat-nosed pupil and rival of the Sophists, might stoop to such a servile act. The septuagenarian wrangler who, for so many years, bored the loungers in the Agora, might deliver an eloquent oration before the Athenian judges, a wisely-arranged and apologetic oration, descending by gentle stages through

the windings of dialectics to the cavillings of the curia. The venerable ironist who set out to reform the art of thinking rather than the purposes of life, who had not been above money-lending, and who, not content with his Xanthippe, had had two sons by his concubine, was willing to die, and indeed met death with noble fortitude; but, deep down at the bottom of his heart, he would have preferred to take the more natural way to Hades. Towards the end of his specious defensive memorial he sought to conciliate his judges by reminding them of his age ('It is useless for you to put me to death. I shall soon die, anyway!'), and offered to pay a fine of thirty minæ if they would but release him.

But Christ, whom their desire to disparage Him has led many subsequent Pilates to compare with the infinitely inferior Socrates, had nothing of the Sophist and advocate, and, like Dante's angel, scorned all 'human arguments.' He would fain remain silent, but, when forced to speak, He spoke candidly and briefly.

Exasperated by this disrespectful silence, Caiaphas' cunning finally discovered a means of forcing Jesus to break it.

'I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.'

So long as they had kept to their first insidious methods, accusing Him falsely and questioning Him with regard to truths that were known to all, Jesus held His peace. But the invocation of the Living God, even from the infamous lips of the high priest himself, was irresistible. Jesus could not refuse Himself to the God who lives, who will live eternally, who lives in all of us, who was present even in that den of malefactors. Nevertheless He hesitated an instant before blinding those short-sighted beings with the glory of His formidable secret.

'If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me.'

Caiaphas is no longer the only one to question; all are on their feet, excited and angry, and, pointing at Him with their long-nailed fingers, they shout:—

'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?'

Jesus may not deny, as Simon had done, the irrecusable truth that was the reason of both His life and His death. He is responsible before His own people and before all peoples. *Responsible* is he who can, who knows how to *respond*, who does *respond* when directly questioned. But as at Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus is determined that the others shall pronounce His true name—and when they do this He does not deny it even though death be the penalty of His assent.

'And Jesus said unto them, Ye say that I am . . . nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'

With His own lips He has pronounced sentence upon Himself. The snarling pack that surrounds Him are slobbering with rage and triumph. He has proclaimed aloud to His murderers what heretofore He had confessed but in secret and only to His best beloved. Though they may have betrayed Him, He will not betray His Father and Himself. Henceforth He can accept all things and drain the chalice to its dregs, for He has said what it was His to say.

Caiaphas triumphs. Feigning a horror he is far from feeling—for, as a Sadducee, he had no faith in the Apocrypha, and his one care is for the gains and honours of the Temple—he rends his priestly garments, crying:—

'He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye?'

And the wild hounds shouted in chorus:—

'He is guilty of death.'

And one and all, without further examination, and without a dissenting voice, condemned Him to death as a false prophet and a blasphemer.

The mock trial is over, and the minds of the becloaked judges are relieved of a great weight. This affair has cost Caiaphas a robe, but the rags which hang about him are as glorious signs of a battle won. He knows not that before

night another far more precious robe will be rent and divided; he has no inkling that his awesomely symbolical act is the recognition of another condemnation; that the hierarchy of which he is the head is invalidated and abolished for all time. His successors will be mere semblances, spurious and illegal priests, and in a few short years the sumptuous garment of granite and marble that covered the sanctuary of Judaism will be rent by the rage of Rome.

LXXIII THE COVERED HEAD

The sentence of death having been passed, the Sanhedrin withdrew in order to discuss how best to obtain the Procurator's ratification of the sentence, and to arrange for its execution before noon of that same day.

Jesus was handed over to the rabble that had invaded the palace. The man who is a brute, when he can be sure of impunity, knows no greater joy than to torment the helpless, especially if his victim be innocent. The instinct of ferocity that crouches, ever untamed, in the depths of each one of us, breaks boldly loose with a snarl; the torturer assumes the aspect of an animal; his teeth become fangs, his hands appear what they really are—claws, and the sounds he utters are no longer harmonious and human-like, but closely resemble the brayings and roarings of wild beasts. If a drop of blood appears, each one seeks to lap it up; there is no liquor more inebriating than blood. Blood is more strengthening than sweet wine, and more beautiful to see than the water preferred by Pilate.

Man's cruelty often takes the form of sport—even tigers will gambol, and children, in so far as their small strength permits, are tigerish in their play.

While awaiting the stranger's ratification of the sentence passed upon this most innocent of all men, His captors amused themselves with their Victim, giving Him a foretaste of what lay in store for Him. They had received leave to make sport of their King, to mock their own God. After all, had they not earned this privilege, had they not

been up all the cold night, climbed the Mount of Olives with the fear in their hearts of encountering resistance, a fear that was not without foundation, for one of them had actually lost an ear; then had there not been the tiresome wait until morn. They had really worked very hard, and at the time of festival, when city and Temple were full of strangers and there was so much for every one to do.

At first they were at a loss to know how to begin their sport. He was bound, indeed, and His friends had all disappeared, but this Man, who fixed a glance upon them such as they had never before beheld, whose steady gaze seemed to look beyond the present, yet searched their very depths like a ray of unwelcome sunlight; this Man, bound, exhausted, upon whose face a fresh outbreak of sweat had once more liquefied the drops of blood that had dried there; this Man of no account, this provincial without patrons or defenders, who had been condemned to death by the highest and holiest tribunal of the Jews, who was to die upon the Cross like any slave or thief; this Man who neither spoke, groaned nor wept, but who looked at them as were He filled with pity for them, as a father would look upon a son who is sick, or a friend watching the sleepless night of a delirious friend; this Man whom all scoffed at, inspired them, nevertheless, with a mysterious sense of reverence.

It was one of the Scribes or Elders who finally started the game by spitting upon the Prisoner as he passed. This man, ever careful of his ritualistic purity, would not contaminate his hands, purified for the Passover, by touching an enemy of the Almighty, who might even now be esteemed impure with the impurity of the grave, so near was He unto death. And thus it was that upon that face, illumined by the virgin light of morn and by the effulgence of imprisoned divinity, upon that face transfigured by the light both of the sun and of love, upon the golden face of the Christ, the spit of the Jew mingled with the first blood of the Passion.

But the vile pack of hounds is not satisfied with this first insult. They are no more afraid of contaminating their

hands, and their superior's example has overcome the last vestige of restraint the Captive's sad and compassionate gaze might have exerted over them. The guards who are nearest to Him cuff Him mercilessly; those who cannot reach His face strike at Him and push Him roughly, and the words their mouths pronounce wound Him far more deeply than their blows.

His face, that had been pure as the white mayflower, that had shone as the gold of the sun, is now disfigured by purple bruises. His beautiful, delicate body quivers under the cruel blows and sways unsteadily as His tormentors repeat their onslaught. To these men who pour out upon Him the dregs of their filthy souls, Jesus speaks no word. He had answered the guard who struck Him, in the presence of Annas, by bidding him correct Him if He had erred; but to this ribald, raging mob He has nothing to say.

One of their number suddenly seizing a rag, flings it over the bruised and bleeding face, ties it at the back, and, pushing back the crowd to make space, cries :—

'Now for a game! This Man vaunts himself a prophet: let us see whether he can guess who it is that smites him.'

Christ's face is covered. Had the ruffian been moved by some vague sense of mercy of which he himself was unconscious, when he thus spared the Victim the sight of these His brothers who were become as wild beasts? Or could he himself not bear that pained and tender gaze?

'Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?'

Why does He not answer? Did He not prophesy the destruction of the Temple, wars and earthquakes, the coming of the Son of Man upon the clouds, and other trifles of this sort? How is it, then, that He cannot guess these simple names, guess the identity of one so close at hand? What sort of a prophet is this? Has He suddenly lost His power, or did He never possess any? He found it easy to deceive those ignorant Galileans, and to make them believe His tales, but this is Jerusalem where they know all about prophets, and where, moreover, they do not hesitate to slay them when they become troublesome.

'And many other things,' Luke tells us, 'blasphemously spake they against Him.'

But Caiaphas and the others are in a hurry, and deem that the servile pack has had enough amusement. The false King must be brought before Pilate that he may ratify the sentence. The Sanhedrin can condemn, but unfortunately, since the coming of the Romans, Judea has no longer possessed the *jus gladii*. And so the high priest, the Scribes and the Elders, followed by the guards who lead Jesus by a rope, and by a shouting crowd that increases in number as the procession advances, set out for the palace of the Procurator.

LXXIV PONTIUS PILATE

Since the year 26, Pontius Pilate, a man unknown to historians before his arrival in Judea, had filled the post of procurator in Tiberius Cæsar's name. If the name Pilate be derived from *Pileatus*, it may be presumed that he was a freedman or the descendant of one, for the *pileus* was the hat worn by manumitted slaves.

He had been but a few years in Judea, but had already succeeded in gaining the bitter hatred of his subjects. It is true that all the information we possess concerning him is derived from Jewish or Christian sources, that is to say from the writings of his avowed enemies; but it would appear that at last he became odious even to his own masters, for in the year 36 the prefect of Syria, Lucius Vitellius, sent him to Rome to exculpate himself before Tiberius. The emperor died before Pilate arrived, but, according to an ancient tradition, Caligula sent him into exile in Gaul, where he committed suicide.

The hatred cherished against him by the Jews was the fruit of the profound scorn he had displayed from the outset for this rebellious and self-contained race, who to him, who had grown up with Roman ideas, must have seemed little better than a wriggling heap of venomous snakes, a filthy and inferior people, worthy only to be beaten into obedience by the rods of his mercenaries.

Fancy an English viceroy, who takes the *Times*, reads Stuart Mill and Shaw, and has Byron and Swinburne in his library ; who is fully conscious of his dignity as a white man, a European, a Briton, and a liberal, sent to administer the affairs of a ragged, famished, sophisticated and turbulent people, and hampered, moreover, by that maze of castes, mythologies and superstitions which, in his heart, he must loathe ! From the questions he put to Jesus, it would appear that Pilate was one of those sceptics of decadent Latinity who were infected by Pyrrhonism and devotees of Epicure ; that he was an encyclopædist of Hellenism, who, no longer believing in the gods of his own country, was unable to conceive the existence of a true God, least of all to believe that a true God would be made manifest in the midst of this unclean and superstitious people, of their factious and jealous clergy, and through this religion which must have seemed to him but a barbarous jumble of Syrian and Chaldean oracles. The only faith he still retained, or rather which his office obliged him to pretend to retain, was in that new religion of Rome, which, as in the days of the republic, was both civic and political, and resided entirely in the cult of the emperor. Pilate's first conflict with the Jews, indeed, arose out of this religion. When the garrison of Jerusalem was changed he issued orders that the troops should enter the city by night without removing the silver images of Cæsar from their ensigns ; but on the morrow horror and tumult reigned when the Jews discovered what had been done. It was the first time the Romans had failed to respect, at least outwardly, the religion of their Palestine subjects. The images of the deified Cæsar set up in the vicinity of their Temple were to them an idolatrous provocation, the beginning of the abomination of desolation. The city was in an uproar ; a deputation was sent to Cæsarea to entreat Pilate to remove the offence, but Pilate refused, and for five days and nights the Jewish leaders haunted him, pestering him with their demands. Finally, to rid himself of this nuisance, the Procurator summoned them to a meeting in the amphitheatre, where he had them surrounded

by guards carrying naked swords, and assured them that, unless they yielded, not one should escape. But instead of begging for mercy the Jews offered their necks to the swords, and Pilate, overcome by such heroic obstinacy, gave orders that the ensigns be brought back to Cæsarea.

However, the Jewish people's hatred of the new Procurator was not diminished by his act of clemency, and the incident did but enhance Pilate's own contempt and inspire him with a desire for revenge. Shortly afterwards he caused certain votive tablets in honour of the emperor to be placed in the palace of Herod, where he resided when he was in Jerusalem. But the priests soon found out what had been done, and again the populace rose in wrath and consternation. Threatening to appeal to Cæsar himself and lay before him all the provocations and cruelties to which Pilate had subjected them, they demanded the immediate removal of these documents of idolatry. But once more the Procurator refused to yield. Hereupon the Jews made good their threat, and orders soon arrived from Tiberius that the tablets be sent back to Cæsarea.

Pilate had been twice thwarted, but on a third occasion he was more fortunate. Coming as he did from the city of baths and aqueducts, he found Jerusalem but ill provided with water and determined to build a great cistern and an aqueduct several miles long. This, however, was a costly undertaking, and in order to carry it to completion Pilate drew large sums from the treasury of the Temple. The treasury was rich, for all the Jews scattered throughout the Empire brought or sent their offerings to Jerusalem, but the priests proclaimed Pilate's act a sacrilege and at their instigation the people rose in rebellion, so that when the Procurator arrived at Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover, a mob whose numbers ran into thousands assembled in riotous mood outside his palace. But on this occasion he did not hesitate to send a large band of soldiers in disguise to mingle with the rioters, who at a given moment began to belabour the most zealous among the Jews with clubs ; and so efficacious did this treatment prove that in a short time the city was restored to calm, the water was

brought into the cistern that Jewish money had paid for, and Pilate was able to perform his numerous and various ablutions to his great satisfaction.

These events were still of recent occurrence when the same high priests who had thrice rebelled against his authority, who had attempted to obtain his removal, who heartily detested him as a Roman, as the personification of foreign domination and of their own bondage, and more heartily still as the man he was, as Pontius Pilate, the enemy of their religion and violator of their treasury—when these same high priests, we repeat, were driven to appeal to him for support in venting their wrath against another, of whom, at that moment, their detestation was even greater. This was a bitter necessity which could not be avoided, for death sentences could not be carried out without the ratification of Cæsar's representative.

At dawn on this memorable Friday, Pontius Pilate, wrapped in his toga, still sleepily yawning at frequent intervals, was waiting for them in Herod's palace, ill-disposed towards these troublesome rioters whose embroilments had forced him from his couch at such an unusual hour.

The band of accusers and agitators finally appeared in the open space before the Prætorium, but here they halted, for had they set foot within a house where there was leaven or bread made with leaven they would have been defiled for the day and cut off from participation in the Passover. The blood of the innocent does not stain, but yeast is another matter.

Pilate was summoned and came to the threshold, demanding sharply :—

'What accusation bring ye against this man?'

Those who are driven to appeal to him are his enemies, and this Man, it would appear, is their enemy, and instinctively Pilate ranges himself on His side. Not that he pities Him—for is He not a Jew like the rest, and a poor Jew to boot? But should He indeed prove to be innocent, he, Pilate, will certainly not satisfy the caprice of these disgusting Israelites.

Caiaphas replies at once in an injured tone :—

'If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee.'

Hereupon Pilate, who is determined not to waste his time over ecclesiastical bickerings, and who is not aware that this is a case for capital punishment, replies :—

'Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.'

These words reveal a certain desire to save the Accused without ranging himself on the side of either party ; but this concession on the part of the Governor, which at any other time would have gratified Caiaphas and his followers, is anything but welcome on the present occasion, for the Sanhedrin can only inflict light penalties, whereas to-day they would pass sentence of death, and for this, alas, the sanction of the Roman is indispensable.

'It is not lawful for us to put any man to death,' was their answer.

At once Pilate perceived what the sentence was that had been pronounced against the unhappy Man who stood before him, and he determined to acquaint himself, without delay, with the nature of His crime. What these rabid zealots esteemed deserving of the extreme penalty might appear but a slight misdemeanour in the eyes of a Roman. But the sly foxes of the Temple were already prepared to meet this difficulty. They were aware that Pilate would not yield to their wishes if they accused Jesus only of seeking to undermine the religion of their fathers and of foretelling the Kingdom of God. They must therefore resort to false accusations. He who is committing a great crime does not hesitate to add other accessory and lesser crimes thereunto. They must use his own arms against Pilate and appeal to his loyalty to Rome and the Emperor, to the very reasons of his office ; and indeed they had already planned to give their accusation a political tinge. Pilate, they knew, would but smile if they accused Jesus merely of being a false Messiah, but if they declared Him to be a traitor, an agitator, one seeking to rouse the people against Rome, Pilate could not do less than put Him to death.

'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and for-

bidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. . . . He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.'

This statement contained as many lies as words. Jesus had commanded the people to 'render unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's'; He had never taken thought of the Romans; He had declared Himself to be the Christ, but not in the coarse and political sense of King of Judea; and, finally, He had never stirred up the people, and had sought only to convert an unhappy, brutish race and found a kingdom of saints. These accusations, however, which if true would have been grave even in the eyes of Pilate, did but lend colour to his suspicions. Could it be possible that these treacherous vipers, who hated both Rome and himself, who had repeatedly sought to overthrow him, and whose sole purpose was to cast forth the ruling stranger, had suddenly become so zealously loyal as to denounce one of their own race for sedition.

Pilate doubted this, and determined to draw his own conclusions by examining the Accused in private. He therefore withdrew into the Prætorium, commanding that Jesus be brought to him. Setting aside the minor accusations, he went straight to the essential point :—

'Art thou the King of the Jews?' he asked.

But Jesus made no answer. How could He make this Roman understand—this man who was ignorant of God's promises, this Pyrrhonian atheist, who confined his religion to the infernal and false worship of a living man (and of what a man! Of Tiberius himself!); how could He explain to this freedman who had been educated in the school of the jurists and rhetoricians of Rome, in the most corrupt atmosphere of the times—in what sense He called Himself King of a realm which is not yet established, of a kingdom entirely of the spirit, whereby all earthly kingdoms shall be abolished?

Jesus saw to the depths of Pilate's soul and held His peace before him as He had already done before Annas and Caiaphas. The Governor could not understand this silence

on the part of one over whom was suspended a sentence of death.

'Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?' he said.

But Jesus would not speak, and Pilate, who was determined not to yield to the enemies both of himself and of this Man, persevered in his examination, that he might extract a denial from Him and the means of saving Him from death.

'Art thou the King of the Jews?' he demanded a second time.

Should Jesus deny this He would be false to Himself; He had confessed Himself to be the Christ both to His Disciples and to the Jews; He would not save Himself by a lie.

As was His wont, He replied by another question.

'Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?'

This question aroused Pilate's indignation.

'Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. What hast thou done? . . . Art thou the King of the Jews?'

With the exception of the exclamation of scorn that escaped Pilate, the rest of his answer was certainly conciliatory. 'For whom dost thou take me? Dost thou not know that I am a Roman, and that my beliefs are not those of thine enemies? The priests, not I, accuse thee. But they are obliged to give thee into my hands; thy salvation rests with me; if thou wilt but tell me that what they say is false, thou shalt go free.'

Although Jesus is not seeking to escape death, nevertheless He will make an attempt to enlighten this pagan. All things are possible to His Father; why should not Pilate be the last of the dying Son's converts?

'My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.'

But this the servant of Tiberius could not understand.

The distinction between a higher and a lower kingdom confused him. If, indeed, they exist, the gods reside in the higher realms ; Hades is the abode of the dead, if anything remain of us after the body has been consumed by fire or worms ; the only true reality is ' this world,' the vast earth with all its kingdoms. And once again he repeated :—

' Art thou a king, then ? '

There is no longer any reason why the Lord should deny. He will tell this blind man what He has proclaimed to others.

' Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.'

Hereupon Pilate, concerned by what he held to be but a daring attempt at mystification, uttered the famous apostrophe :—

' What is truth ? '

And without waiting for an answer he rose to depart. The sceptical Roman, who had probably often listened to the endless disputes of the philosophers, and who had been led by all these metaphysical contradictions and sophistical cavillings to the conclusion that truth does not exist, or if it do exist, that it is not given to man to recognize it, never for a moment dreamed that this obscure Hebrew who stood before him as a malefactor could give him truth. To Pilate was granted the privilege on that one day of his life of gazing upon the face of Truth, of Supreme Truth made Man, and he could not see it. Living Truth, the Truth that might have resurrected him, have made a new being of him, stood before him, clothed in human flesh, draped in plain garments, with a face that was bruised and hands that were bound. But in the pride of his heart Pilate had no suspicion of the supernatural favour that was being bestowed upon him, a favour millions would envy him even after he had been dead for centuries. At that moment he would have deemed him a raving maniac who should have told him that through this one meeting, this tremendous honour of speaking with Jesus Himself and of consigning Him to the Cross, his name would become

famous for all time and amongst all peoples, albeit remaining always infamous and accursed.

Pilate's blindness was appalling and incurable, but later, on that same day, Christ would forgive him also, for even less than all others are the blind aware of what they do.

LXXV CLAUDIA PROCULA

As Pilate was about to go forth to give his answer to the Jews, who were muttering impatiently and moving about restlessly outside the gates, a servant approached him with a message from his wife :—

'Have thou nothing to do with that just man : for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.'

No one of the four historians tells us how the Procurator received his wife's unexpected intercession, nor do we know anything of her beyond her name. According to the gospel of Nicodemus she was called Claudia Procula, and if so she may well have belonged to the *Claudia gens*, who were one of the richest and most powerful families in Rome. It is probable that both by birth and connection she was of higher rank than her husband, and that Pilate's important post in Judea was due to her influence.

If this be indeed the case, he cannot have been indifferent to Claudia Procula's prayer, especially if he loved her, and we may conclude that he did (in so far, at least, as a man of his stamp is capable of loving) from the fact that he had sought permission to bring her with him into Asia ; for the ancient *Lex Oppia*, although it had been modified by a decree of the Senate when Cethegus and Varus were consuls, forbade proconsuls to take their wives with them, and special permission must have been obtained from Tiberius for Claudia Procula to accompany her husband to Judea.

The brief account of her intercession we possess leaves the reason for it shrouded in mystery. Matthew alludes to a dream that had caused her pain on Jesus' account. It is probable she had recently been hearing much of the new Prophet ; she may even have seen Him ; and this Man who differed so widely from the rest of the Jews, and who had

naught either of the vulgar demagogue or of the sanctimonious Pharisee, must have appealed strongly to the Roman lady's ardent imagination. She did not understand the language that was spoken at Jerusalem, but some dragoman attached to the curia may have translated certain of Jesus' words to her, which had sufficed to convince her that He could not be the dangerous criminal His enemies pretended.

At that time the Romans, and especially the women, were beginning to be attracted by the myths and cults of the East, which satisfied their longing for immortality better than could the ancient Latin religion, that was little more than a legalized form of traffic in sacrifices, for utilitarian or political ends. Many patrician ladies, even at Rome, had sought initiation in the cults of Mithras, of Osiris and of the Great Mother, and some had even displayed a leaning towards Judaism. It was precisely under Tiberius that the numerous Jews residing in the capital had been expelled, because—according to Josephus—some among them had misled a Roman matron, Fulvia by name, whom they had converted to their religion. And if we are to believe Suetonius, Fulvia was not the only convert.

It is not at all unlikely that, living in Judea, Claudia Procula should have been curious to know something of the religion professed by her husband's subjects, and should have sought to acquaint herself with the doctrines preached by this Galilean Prophet of whom all Jerusalem was talking. The fact remains that she was convinced that Jesus was a 'just man,' and therefore innocent. That night's dream—a terrible nightmare that had greatly distressed her—had strengthened her in this conviction, and it is not to be wondered at that, counting upon the influence every wife exerts over her husband, even after he has ceased to love her, she should have sent her entreaty to Pilate.

For us it is sufficient that she called Him whom the Jews sought to slay, a 'just man.' The centurion at Capernaum, the woman of Canaan and Claudia Procula were the first Gentiles to believe in Jesus, and it is not without reason that the Greek Church honours her as a saint.

His animosity towards Caiaphas, and perhaps also his interview with the Accused, had already inclined Pilate towards neutrality if not towards clemency, and his wife's message can but have strengthened this inclination. Claudia Procula did not say, 'Save him!' but, 'Have nothing to do with him!' and such indeed was his intention. As had he some vague inkling of the gravity of what was about to happen, Pilate would not be a party to the death of this mysterious Mendicant, who proclaimed himself a king. He had told them at the outset to judge Him themselves, but they would not. Now another means of ridding himself of an unpleasant obligation occurred to him, and, returning to Jesus, he asked Him if He were from Galilee.

Pilate is saved! Jesus does not come under his jurisdiction but under that of Herod Antipas. Fortunately Herod is in Jerusalem, being come hither, as is his wont, for the Passover. The Procurator has found a legitimate means both of satisfying his wife and extricating himself from an uncomfortable position. Moreover, he will gain favour with the Jews by leaving the final decision to one of themselves, and at the same time he will be thwarting the Tetrarch, whom he hates from the bottom of his heart because he suspects him, and this justly, of spying upon him, and reporting to Tiberius concerning him. Without loss of time, therefore, he orders the soldiers to conduct Jesus to Antipas.

LXXVI THE WHITE CLOAK

The third judge before whom Christ was led was a son of that bloodthirsty brute, Herod the Great, by one of his five wives. He was, indeed, worthy of his sire, for he was as cruel to his brothers as his father had been to his own children. When his brother Archelaus was arraigned by his subjects, Herod did his best to have him driven into exile, and he stole the wife of another brother who was also called Herod. At the age of seventeen he became Tetrarch of Galilee and Perœa, and, to gain favour with Tiberius,

offered to provide secret information concerning the doings and sayings not only of his own brothers but of all the Roman dignitaries in Judea as well. On one of his visits to Rome he became enamoured of Herodias, who was both his niece and his sister-in-law, being the daughter of his brother Aristobulus and the wife of his other brother Herod. And, undismayed by the double incest, he persuaded Herodias to follow him with her daughter Salome. His first wife, a daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia Petræa, took refuge with her father, who waged war against Antipas and defeated him.

This happened while John the Baptist's fame was growing among the people, and, the Prophet having dared to cry shame upon the incestuous and adulterous couple, Herodias persuaded her new spouse to have him seized and cast into prison. How the Tetrarch, his senses inflamed by the lewd posing of the immature Salome, and already, perhaps, meditating a second act of incest, was forced to present her with the head of the Fiery Prophet upon a golden charger is a story all are acquainted with.

But even after his decapitation the memory of John tormented Herod, and when men began to tell of Jesus and His miracles, he said to his courtiers : ' John have I beheaded ; but who is this of whom I hear such things ? '

It would appear that he had this new Prophet closely watched, and at one time was determined to deal with Him as he had dealt with John. But, for reasons either of expediency or of superstition, he finally decided to have no further dealings with prophets, and concluded that his best plan would be to force Jesus to leave his tetrarchy. One day certain Pharisees, acting in all probability at Herod's instigation, went to Jesus, saying :—

' Get thee out, and depart hence : for Herod will kill thee.'

' Go ye, and tell that fox,' He replied, ' . . . I must walk to-day and to-morrow, and the day following : for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.'

And now, at Jerusalem, when He is near unto death, He appears before that same fox. Herod, the traitor and spy,

the adulterous and incestuous murderer of John, the enemy of the prophets, is indeed the man best fitted to condemn innocence. But Jesus had christened him well—for he has more of the fox than of the tiger, and is not bold enough to usurp the functions of Pilate. Indeed, as Luke tells us: 'When Herod saw Jesus he was exceeding glad; for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.'

This son of the Idumean and of the Samaritan, who had scorched his fingers at the fire of John the Baptist, received Jesus as an experienced tamer, whose arms bear the scars of the lions' teeth, may receive a new specimen that is brought to him for inspection. Like all Eastern barbarians he was ever avid of the marvellous, and imagined Jesus to be but a wandering conjurer who could repeat his tricks at will. He hated Him as he had hated John, the more because he feared Him; these prophets possess a power he cannot understand but which fills him with terror; he has a suspicion that John's decapitation had brought him ill-luck. He, like all the others, was eager for Jesus' suppression, but he had no wish to be an accomplice in putting Him to death.

Perceiving that at that moment no miracles were to be looked for from Jesus, he began to question Him concerning many things; but Jesus would not answer. He had broken His silence before Annas, Caiaphas and Pilate, but He would not address a single word to this crowned malefactor. Annas and Caiaphas are His declared enemies. Pilate is a blind man who is feeling his way in the hope of saving Jesus; but this man is a dastardly fox and is unworthy even of insult at the hands of Christ.

The chief priests and Scribes, fearing that John's murderer might lack the courage, as indeed he did, to put Jesus to death, had followed their Victim thither, and now repeated their accusations in terms of still greater violence. These angry denunciations, combined with the silence the Accused persisted in maintaining, exasperated Antipas, and when he and his soldiers had brutally outraged the divine Victim,

he threw a gorgeous cloak upon His shoulders and sent Him back to Pilate.

Like the Roman, he also, but for different reasons, was loath to condemn Him who had been baptized by John, who was perhaps John himself risen from the dead and come to seek vengeance. But before sending Him forth Herod had bestowed a gift upon Him which was an unconscious acknowledgment of the doomed Man's true quality. The shining, white mantle was, as Josephus informs us, the garment worn by the kings of Judea, and Jesus was accused of aspiring to become king of the Jews. The crafty Antipas sought to throw ridicule on this pretended aspiration by the irony of his gift, but, by casting about Him what was at once the sign of innocence and of sovereignty, he was but sending Pilate a symbolical message, which, all unintentionally, corroborated Claudia Procula's warning, Caiaphas' accusation, and what Christ Himself had confessed.

LXXVII AWAY WITH THIS MAN!

Pilate had flattered himself that he was rid of the responsibility his adversaries would have laid upon him; but when he beheld Jesus returning, wrapped in the white cloak of royalty, he saw that he must assume a definite line of action.

The determination of the very men he had so many reasons to suspect, his wife's pity, the Culprit's answers, Antipas' refusal to pronounce judgment, all inclined him more strongly than ever to refuse the life of this Man to those who clamoured for it. While Jesus was being dragged before the Tetrarch, Pilate had perhaps been questioning some of his attendants concerning this pretended King, and any information he may have extracted could but strengthen him in his determination to save Him. Jesus' sermons contained nothing that could offend Pilate; many of His utterances, indeed, must have found favour with him, or at least have struck him as well adapted to uphold the authority of Rome.

Jesus preached love of one's enemies, and in Judea the Romans were regarded as enemies; He called the poor blessed, which, in itself, was an exhortation to resignation rather than to rebellion; He advised the Jews to 'render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,' which means to pay tribute-money to the Emperor; He was opposed to that formalism of the Pharisees which raised so many difficulties in the way of the governing Roman; He did not respect the Sabbath and sat at meat with publicans and Gentiles; and, finally, had declared that His kingdom was not of this world but of a world so metaphysical and remote that it could not possibly be considered as a menace either to Tiberius or his successors. If Pilate were aware of all this he could but tell himself (with that superficiality of insight common to all sceptics, especially to such as esteem themselves clever statesmen) that it would be a good thing, both for Rome and himself, if many of the Jews would follow Jesus rather than join the Zealots and stir up rebellion.

He was therefore determined to do his best to save Jesus, but he also desired to give his act of indulgence a point of irony, that should reveal his intention of insulting the chief priests, who had thrice risen against him and were now seeking to worry him into assuming the office of executioner. To the last he would pretend to recognize Jesus as king of the Jews. 'Here is your King, the sovereign you deserve, unworthy and faithless race that you are! A carpenter from the provinces, a vagabond, a madman who raves of superterrestrial kingdoms and drags in his wake a dozen fishermen, a handful of peasants and a few foolish women. Behold the state of misery to which you yourselves have reduced him! But why murder him? Rather should you acknowledge him; for you do not deserve a better monarch. For my part, I will follow your example and amuse myself with him for a time and then send him about his business.'

And having ordered that Jesus be brought forth, he went to confront the chief priests and the multitude who were straining forward with upturned faces, in eager anticipation of the sentence.

'Ye have brought this man unto me, as one who per-

verteth the people ; and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him : no, nor yet Herod : for I sent you to him ; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. I will therefore chastise him and release him.'

This, however, was not the answer the dogs that were now howling in the courtyard had expected, and from those yawning mouths there suddenly burst a great cry :—

' Away with this man ! '

Scourging would be all too light a punishment for this enemy of the God of Armies, of the God of Trade ! Something quite different was needed to satisfy the butchers of the Temple. They, the Jews, were come to ask for blood, not for pardon.

' Away with him ! ' shouted Annas and Caiaphas ; the venomous Pharisees hiss the words, while the traffickers in sacred offerings, the changers of sacred coins, the drivers of asses and the caravan-bearers shriek them aloud.

' Away with him ! ' shout the Scribes, wrapping their long cloaks of their caste more tightly around them, and all the pedlars from the Paschal fair, all the tavern-keepers of the city, the Levites, the servants of the Temple, the usurers' clerks, the priests' errand-runners, the whole base rabble that crowds around the Prætorium re-echo the words.

As soon as he can make himself heard, Pilate asks :—

' What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ ? '

And all cry out :—

' Let him be crucified ! '

The Governor persists, however, saying :—

' Why, what evil hath he done ? '

But the crowd shouts louder than ever :—

' Let him be crucified ! Let him be crucified ! '

Jesus, pale but composed, enveloped in the white robe of mockery, gazes tenderly upon the multitude who are eager to give Him what His heart has so long prayed for. He is dying for them in the divine hope of saving them by His death, and they are upon Him, shouting as were He seeking to escape from the fate He has freely accepted. His friends are absent—they are in hiding ; these are His own

people who would nail Him to the Cross ; only a stranger, a Roman, a Gentile defends His life. Why is not he also moved to compassion ; why does he not give Jesus up to them that they may crucify Him ? Does he not see that his misplaced pity is but prolonging and embittering the agony ? Jesus has loved greatly, and it is but meet that He should be hated ; He has raised the dead, and it is but just that He should be put to death ; He would save, and it is but natural that all should seek His destruction ; He is innocent, and it is right that He should suffer for the guilty.

But Pilate is obstinate, and will not yield either to the howling of the Jews or to Jesus' silent appeal. He is determined to save this Man at all costs. This time he will stand firm against an enraged and greasy rabble.

He has failed to transfer to Antipas the unpleasant responsibility of pronouncing capital sentence, nor can he convince this cruel people that their pitiful King is innocent. They are thirsting for blood ; they are eager for the spectacle of a crucifixion on this day of festival. But Pilate will supply them with a substitute ; he will offer them the miserable carcass of a murderer in exchange for the body of One who is innocent.

' I find in him no fault at all. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover. . . . Whom will ye that I release unto you ? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ ? '

Taken entirely by surprise, the crowd knew not what to answer. Thus far the name had been one, one the victim and one the punishment demanded—all had been as clear as the heavens on that mid-April morning. But here was this hateful idolater bringing up another name that confused everything, and all for the sake of saving One who was a source of scandal to all good Jews. Instead of crucifying Him he would but scourge Him ; and now he is actually attempting to put us off with the offer of another victim, who is not the one we want. But the Elders, the Scribes and the priests quickly recovered from their astonishment, and as they had no intention of allowing

Jesus to escape their vengeance, they immediately suggested a fitting answer. Thus, when Pilate asked a second time :—

'Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you ?' the crowd was ready to reply with one voice :—

'Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas !'

The prisoner with whose blood the Governor sought to ransom Jesus was no common vagabond. Popular tradition, indeed, has handed him down as a highway robber, a professional criminal ; but his surname—Bar-rabban, which signifies Son of the Rab, or, better still, Disciple of the Master, because the Rabbis' pupils were also called Sons—proves that either by birth or by his erudition he belonged to the caste of the doctors of the law. Both Mark and Luke state explicitly that he was accused of having committed murder during an insurrection ; his, therefore, was a political crime. Barabbas, educated in the school of the Scribes that perpetually bewailed the downfall of the kingdom and instilled hatred of the idolatrous masters, probably belonged to the Zealots and had been seized during one of those unsuccessful uprisings which at that time were of such frequent occurrence. Was it possible, then, that the Sadducees and Pharisees, who, at bottom, shared the Zealots' views, although for reasons of state or of cowardice they may have concealed them or have feigned to ignore them, would be satisfied with this absurd exchange ?

Barabbas, murderer that he was—or rather precisely because he was a murderer—was regarded as a patriot, a martyr, as one of the foreigner's victims. Jesus, on the other hand, although He had killed no one, was seeking to perpetrate a far more heinous crime ; He sought, indeed, to overthrow the law of Moses and to destroy the Temple. The first, in a word, was a species of national hero ; the other was the enemy of the race. Could they hesitate in their choice ?

'Let Barabbas go free ! Away with this man !'

Again Pontius Pilate was baulked in his endeavours to save both himself and the Accused. He must have perceived ere this that the Jews would never let go of the flesh

wherein they had fixed their teeth, the only flesh that could satisfy them. They needed it on that day as they needed air and bread. They would not stir from the spot, they would not even go away to feed themselves until they had seen that false Messiah dead upon the Cross.

Pontius Pilate is a coward. He is afraid of committing an injustice or of displeasing his wife; afraid to yield and, at the same time, afraid to withdraw Jesus to a place of safety; afraid to send his soldiers to disperse that arrogant and grunting herd; afraid to use the power wherewith he is invested, and decree that Jesus the Innocent shall go free and not Barabbas the murderer. A true Roman, a Roman of the old school, would not have had a moment's hesitation, but would either have satisfied the demands of these drunken postulants in order not to waste a minute in defending an obscure visionary, or would have declared at the very outset that the man was innocent and afforded him the protection of the Empire.

But Pilate's stratagems, delays and aimless questionings, his half-measures and terms, his indecisions, his vain and quickly discarded resolves, his uncertain moves which were never followed up, had, by slow degrees, led him into the very position he had striven to avoid. His failure to put an end to the matter at once by a decisive verdict had but rendered the leaders more aggressive and fanned the wrath of the populace. Now two ways only remained open to him: either he must succumb ignominiously after all his shuffling and display of resistance, or run the risk of raising a storm, which at this time, when half Judea was within the walls of Jerusalem, might well lead to a dangerous insurrection.

Confused by the shouting of the crowd and by his own cowardly reflections, he can think of no other expedient than to appeal a second time to these his subjects to whom he should but command:—

'What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?'

'Crucify him! Let him be crucified!'

'But he has done no evil.'

'Crucify him! Crucify him!'

How can this odious foreigner know whether Jesus has or has not done evil? According to our faith He is an impostor, a blasphemer, an enemy of the people, and He must die. Even though He have done nothing to deserve death, yet He must die, for His very words are more dangerous than any criminal act could be.

'Crucify him! Crucify him!'

'Take him!' Pilate cries at last, 'and crucify him yourselves, for I find no sin in him.'

'We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.'

Jesus' silence seems to dominate the awful din. They are fighting for His body, and He hardly appears to be conscious of the fact. Since the beginning of time He has known that His fate was sealed, and that this is His hour. The struggle is so unequal! On the one side, a Gentile who knows naught of Him, who does not understand Him, who is not defending Him because his heart is full of love, but because it is overflowing with hatred; who is not defending Him openly, but by means of evasion and subterfuge; who fears rebellion more than injustice, who stands his ground because he is determined not to give way, and not because he is convinced of Jesus' innocence. On the other side is a clergy that sees itself menaced, a ruling caste that has been scourged, a people that may be led to any lengths of evil, as indeed may all peoples. Any one can foretell what the end will be.

Yet Pontius Pilate will not yield. He will give Barabbas up to these, his accomplices, but he will not surrender Jesus to the Jews. Again he reverts to his first plan of inflicting a lighter punishment upon Him. Perhaps the sight of the bruises and of the blood produced by a scourging will satisfy them, and persuade them to leave this innocent One in peace, who looks with such tender pity both upon the cowardly shepherd and the snarling wolves.

The Governor has said that he finds no evil in Him, yet he will have Him scourged. This contradiction, this halved justice, this compromise is consistent with Pilate's character, but, like his other attempts, it will prove a failure, will

be but one more ignominious episode before his final defeat.

The Jews are still shouting themselves hoarse :—

' Let him be crucified ! '

And Pilate, withdrawing into the Prætorium, consigns Jesus to the Roman soldiers that they may scourge Him.

LXXVIII A CROWNED KING

The mercenaries, who in the provinces formed the bulk of the legions, were but waiting for a sign. All this time the soldiers who garrisoned the Prætorium, standing stiff and silent, had been watching this strange colonial conflict, understanding nothing save that their chief did not appear to be distinguishing himself.

At first they had been amused by the gesticulations and shouting of the Jews, but since they had perceived the difficulties the Governor was in, struggling vainly to extricate himself from an entanglement that had called him forth at such an early hour, they had watched him closely as dogs watching an unskilful hunter who wanders hither and yon, and cannot make up his mind to fire at the game close at hand.

But at last something was going to happen, the scourging of a Jew whom all the other Jews hated.

When the whole company had assembled in the courtyard, the white mantle Antipas had given Him was taken off from Jesus' shoulders—the first booty of this episode—and His other garments were stripped off. The lictors unbound their rods, disputing among themselves for the strongest. They were all men who knew their business, they knew how to strike. Jesus, half-naked, and bound to a pillar that the scourgers might not have to stoop and thus lessen the force of their blows, prayed silently to His Father for the very men who were sweating over their cruel task. Had He not said : ' Love them who hate you ; do good to them who persecute you ; offer the right cheek to him who smites you on the left ' ? At this moment all He can do for His tormentors is to pray to God to pardon them. They

also are prisoners and must obey orders, and they know not who this Man is whom they scourge with such blind zeal. Each one of them has been flogged at one time or another for some infringement of discipline, and they find nothing singular in the fact that the Procurator, who is a magistrate and a Roman, should inflict the same punishment upon a culprit belonging to an inferior and conquered race.

Hit hard, ye legionaries, for some of that blood which is beginning to flow is being shed for you. It is the first blood drawn by man from the veins of the Son of Man ; at the Last Supper His blood appeared as wine, and in the Garden of Olives that which ran with His sweat was wrung from Him by inward and spiritual anguish. But to-day the hands of man are drawing blood from Christ's veins ; the callous hands of soldiers in the service of the rich and mighty are causing it to flow ; the hands of the scourgers before those of them who shall nail Him to the Cross. His back, bruised, furrowed and bleeding, is now ready to lie upon the wood of the Cross ; the courtyard of the dastardly foreigner is wet with blood. The doorkeeper will come presently and wash away the stains, but they will appear again upon the white hands of Pilate himself, even after he shall have washed them in the presence of the multitude. The strokes to the number prescribed have been administered, but the legionaries, now that they have warmed to their work, are loath to let their Victim go. Up to this point they have been obeying an order ; now they are determined to amuse themselves in their own way. According to that howling rabble in the square outside, this Man pretends to be a king. Let us humour His insane fancy, especially that by acting thus we can offend those Jews who refuse to recognize His royal dignity.

One of the soldiers removes his scarlet cloak—the *clamide coccinea* of the legionaries—and puts it upon the bloodstained shoulders ; another unbinds a bundle of dry brambles that have been prepared for kindling the guards' fire in the evening, and quickly twists a few twigs into a crown which he places upon Jesus' head ; a third sends a

slave for a reed which he forces into His right hand, and then, grinning with delight, pushing Him roughly forward, they enthrone Him upon a stone bench. One by one they defile before Him, each, as he passes, bending the knee in mock reverence, crying :—

'Hail, King of the Jews.'

But this sham homage does not satisfy them all. Some smite Him upon the cheek that still bears the marks of the fingers of Caiaphas' servants ; others spit upon Him ; one seizes the reed and with it smites Him upon the head, so that the thorns penetrate the flesh more deeply still, and upon His forehead great drops of blood appear that are as red as the cloak He wears.

They would have invented many other equally diverting forms of torture had not the noise of their merry-making drawn the Governor to the spot, who immediately commanded that this King they had scourged be led forth. By preparing this masquerade the legionaries had served Pilate's purpose of making mock of the Jews, and, well pleased with their efforts, he took Jesus by the hand and led Him on to the splendid terrace where, displaying Him to the mob of brutes below, he cried :—

'Behold the man !' *Ecce homo !*

Pointing to His bleeding shoulders which the rods had bruised and furrowed. Pilate seemed to say to that howling mob :—

'Look upon your King, the only King you deserve, standing here in His true majesty, arrayed as is befitting ! His crown is of sharp thorns ; His mantle is the cloak of a common soldier ; His sceptre is a reed that grew in one of your stagnant ditches. These attributes are well suited to this mock royalty, to this King whom you, contemptible race that you are, have unjustly repudiated. You thirst for His blood ? Here it is, then ; see how it dries upon His wounds and drips from the thorns of His crown. There is not much of it, but it should suffice, for this is innocent blood, and in causing it to flow for your satisfaction I have already conceded overmuch. And now begone, for I am tired of your howling.'

But neither the sight nor the words reduced the Jews to silence. To satisfy them something besides a scourging and a foolish masquerade was needed. Pilate had mocked them, but he would find that this was no time for jesting. Twice already he had contended against them and suffered defeat, and so it should be again. A few bruises and a comedy staged by the Roman mercenaries was no fitting punishment for this enemy of the Almighty; there are still trees in Judea and there are nails as well wherewith to pierce His hands and feet; and once more the hoarse voices cry in chorus :—

'Crucify him! Crucify him!'

Pilate perceives too late that he has entangled himself to such an extent that he will never be able to extricate himself. On every point he has encountered determined resistance, for which he had been totally unprepared. Those splendid words, 'Behold the man!' seem inspired, but he himself does not grasp the full significance of this proclamation that surpasses his understanding. He does not know that he has found a part, at least, of that truth for which he sought; has found a truth that is more profound than any the philosophers of Greece and Rome could teach him. He would not be able to explain why Jesus is indeed *The Man*, the symbol of all suffering humanity, betrayed by its leaders, deceived by its teachers, daily crucified by kings who devour their subjects, by the rich who cause the poor to weep. Jesus is the Man of Sorrows whom Isaiah foretold, the Man of humble aspect whom all have repulsed and who will die for all men; the only Son of the One God, who has assumed human shape and who will again descend to earth in all the glory of power and of the new sun, while the dead rise from their graves at the summons of the last trump. But on this day, in the eyes of Pilate as in those of Pilate's enemies, He is but a miserable being, a being of no account, fit only to be scourged and crucified, a man but not The Man, a mortal but not a God. Why does Pilate still hesitate to consign Him to His executioners, wasting time in enigmatical utterances?

Pilate is not ready to yield even now. In the presence

of this silent Man, the Roman is experiencing a sense of dread and oppression such as he has never before known. Who, then, is He whom a whole people would see dead, and whom he, Pilate, can neither save nor bring himself to send to His death? Again he appeals to Jesus, saying :—

'Whence art thou?'

But Jesus is silent, and presently Pilate adds :—

'Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee?'

At this the outraged King raises His head and breaks His silence.

'Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.'

Caiaphas and his colleagues are the true perpetrators of the crime; the others are but dogs they have set on, are but tools that do their bidding. Pilate himself is but the unwilling instrument of sacerdotal wrath and of the divine will.

In his extremity the Governor repeats his first words :—

'Behold your King!'

The Jews, exasperated by the repetition of this insult, burst into furious invective, shouting :—

'If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar!'

At last they have discovered the coward's weakest point, and how to attack him. At that time the fate of every Roman magistrate, no matter how lofty his position was, rested with Cæsar alone. An accusation of this sort, supported by a clever and crafty advocate—and there were many such among the Jews, as Pilate would discover later when he should read Philon's Memorial—might ruin him for all time. But disregarding the threat, he again repeated his foolish question :—

'Shall I crucify your King?'

Hereupon the chief priests, perceiving that the victory is practically won, utter their last lie :—

'We have no king but Cæsar!'

And a cry that came from the hearts of the multitude accompanied their leaders' lie :—

'Away with this man! Away with him! Crucify him!'

Pilate finally succumbs, as indeed he must if he would avoid an uprising that might easily spread throughout Judea. His conscience can hardly trouble him, he reflects, for has he not tried all means of saving this Man who will not save Himself?

He has attempted to rescue Jesus by referring His case to the Sanhedrin, well aware that that assembly cannot pass a sentence of death; he has attempted to save Him by consigning Him to Herod; by declaring that he himself finds no evil in Him; by offering to release Him instead of Barabbas; by ordering Him to be scourged, in the hope that this shameful punishment will be deemed sufficient, and move those stony hearts to pity. But all these efforts having failed, he can hardly be expected to assume the responsibility of a general uprising for the sake of this troublesome Prophet, and still less can he be expected to risk denunciation to Tiberius and the loss of his appointment for this Man's sake.

Pilate honestly believes himself to be innocent of this innocent blood, and in order that the fact of his innocence may be impressed upon all present by a visible and memorable symbol, he calls for a basin of water and washes his hands before the multitude, saying as he does so:—

'I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.'

And with one voice the Jews shout:—

'His blood be on us, and on our children.'

The Procurator then commanded that Barabbas be set free, and consigned the 'Just Man' to the soldiers, that they might crucify Him.

But the water wherewith he bathed his hands had no power to cleanse them. Even unto this day those hands have remained bloodstained, and throughout all eternity they will be red with blood. It was in his power to save, and he would not. His fickle conduct and his craven spirit, warped by the irony of scepticism, sent Jesus to the Place of the Skull. His action would have been less vile had he sanctioned the murder because he honestly believed Jesus to be guilty. But he knew there was no evil in Him,

knew that He was a Just Man, as Claudia Procula had said, and as he himself had declared to the Jews. There is no excuse for one in authority, who has been given power that he may protect the just against evil-doers, when, for fear of injury to himself, he allows an innocent victim to suffer death. 'But,' Pilate may argue, 'I did all I could to wrest Him from the clutches of His enemies.' This is inaccurate. He did indeed try many ways, but he overlooked the one way that would have led to success. He did not offer himself, did not sacrifice himself, and would not endanger his own position and fortune. The Jews hated Jesus, but they also hated Pilate; Pilate who had thwarted them in so many ways. Instead of proffering the seditious Barabbas in exchange for Jesus, he should have offered himself, Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judea, and the people would probably have accepted the substitution. No other victim could satisfy the rage of the Jews. He need not have given his life; he had but to defy them to denounce him to Cæsar as Cæsar's enemy. Tiberius would have deprived him of his office and probably banished him, but he would have carried with him into exile the blessed consolation of innocence. The fear that now drove him to deliver Jesus into the hands of His enemies, making Him an expiatory offering, materialized a few years later, when, accused by the Jews and Samaritans, he was deposed by the Prefect of Syria and sent into exile by Caligula. But the shadow of the Great Silent Prophet, whose murder he had sanctioned, went with him into Gaul. In vain had he built the great cistern in Jerusalem; in vain had he washed his hands in the presence of the multitude with water drawn therefrom. That water was of Judea, was bewitched, troubled water that removes no stains; and nothing wherein he may wash them can ever free those hands of Pilate's from the stains left upon them by the divine blood of Christ.

LXXIX THE DAY OF PREPARATION

The sun was climbing the bare April sky and had nearly reached the highest point on its journey. The better part

of the morning had been wasted in the contest between the Governor and Christ's furious accusers, and now they must make haste. An ancient Mosaic law prescribed that the bodies of those who had been put to death be removed from the place of execution before sunset, and these April days are shorter than those of June.

Caiaphas, moreover, supported by a yelping pack of followers, would not feel easy until those wandering feet had been stopped for ever, had been fastened to the Cross by iron nails. Caiaphas has not forgotten how, but a few days since, Jesus had entered Jerusalem amidst waving branches and the singing of joyous hymns of praise. The high priest is sure of the city itself, but at the present moment it is crowded with provincials from all parts of the country, whose interests and passions are not those of the Temple's dependants. Caiaphas is especially uneasy concerning those Galileans who had accompanied Him to Jerusalem, who are devoted to Him, and may make a sudden attempt to rescue Him, and thus delay if not prevent the accomplishment of what he has vowed shall be done upon that day.

Pilate, also, is anxious to rid himself of the sight of this most troublesome but innocent Victim; he will think no more about Him, and hopes, when Jesus shall have suffered death, to be delivered from the memory of His gaze, of His words, and, above all, from that sense of bitter discomfort that too closely resembles remorse. Although his hands have been washed and dried, it seems to him that this Man is silently condemning him to a punishment worse than death itself; in the presence of this doomed Being whom he has caused to be scourged, he feels himself to be the culprit, and in order to show his contempt for the true authors of all this trouble, he dictates to one of his scribes the text of the *Titulus* or inscription that the Prisoner will wear suspended from His neck until it is nailed to the Cross above His head. The words Pilate dictates are: *Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.* And the scribe writes the inscription in three different languages, in large red letters on a whitewashed board.

When the leaders of the Jews who have remained to hasten the preparations read the writing, they immediately protest, saying :—

'Write not the King of the Jews; but that he said I am King of the Jews.'

But the Procurator cuts the matter short by answering briefly :—

'What I have written I have written.'

These are the last words of his that history records, and they are the words whose meaning is most profound. They seem to say : 'I am forced to give you this Man's life, but I maintain what I said at the outset : Jesus is a Nazarene, which also means a Saint ; and He is your King, the miserable King befitting your miserable condition. I desire that all shall know (and for this reason I have caused these words to be written in Latin and in Greek as well as in Hebrew) how your ill-begotten race treats Saints and Kings. And now begone, for I have borne with you over long. *Quod scripsi scripsi.*'

Meanwhile some of the soldiers had put His own poor garments upon the King and hung the inscription upon His breast. Others had been to the storerooms of the Prætorium for three heavy pine crosses. The escort was ready, and Pilate pronounced the prescribed formula : '*I, lictor, expedi crucem,*' and the awesome procession started on its way.

The Centurion rode first, he whom Tacitus, with terrible brevity, terms *exactor mortis.* After him, surrounded by armed legionaries, came Jesus and two thieves who were to be crucified with Him, each bearing his own cross, as was prescribed by Roman rule. Behind the prisoners trooped the noisy, shuffling crowd, whose numbers were increased at every step by the curious, and by the accomplices to the crime.

It was the Day of Preparation, the last vigil before Easter. The fleeces of thousands of lambs were stretched on the roofs in the sun, and from every house a thread of smoke curled upwards, spreading in the air like an opening flower, and losing itself in the sky that rang with the noise of the

festival. Old hags with hooked and cruel noses came hobbling forth from the alleys, mumbling curses; dirty children hopped along with bundles under their arms; bearded men hurried by, bearing a kid or a small cask of wine upon their shoulders; donkey drivers passed, dragging dejected donkeys by the halter; young girls stared boldly, with great, languid eyes, at the strangers who, dazed and deafened by this holiday hubbub, were advancing slowly and cautiously. In every house the wife was preparing all that would be needed on the morrow, because for four-and-twenty hours after sunset all hands were relieved of the curse of Adam. The lambs, skinned and quartered, were ready for the fire; the unleavened bread, smelling of the oven, lay heaped in the cupboard; the husband was filling the jugs with wine, and the children, eager to have a hand in all these preparations, were picking over the bitter herbs that were piled upon the table.

Every one was busy; there was no one who did not look forward to that festive day of rest, whereon all the members of the family would gather round their father's board and eat in peace and drink the wine of thanksgiving, with God to witness their happiness, for from every house the songs of praise of the grateful would rise and invoke His coming. Even the poor felt rich on that day; the rich, whose profits increased at this season, felt almost generous; children, in whom experience has not yet deadened anticipation, became more affectionate, and mothers felt themselves surrounded by a warmer atmosphere of love.

That state of happy confusion, noise and bustle that ever precedes great popular solemnities was apparent everywhere. A breath of spring and of hope was come to purify this stronghold of the circumcised, and the eastern sun was shedding a very flood of light upon the four hills of Jerusalem.

Amidst these festive surroundings, these preparations, this throng of joyous beings, the sinister procession that accompanied the three who bore crosses upon their shoulders advanced slowly, like a funeral train. Around them everything speaks of happiness and of life; but they are going

to suffering and to death. All men are joyously awaiting the coming of the evening when, with those they love, they will sit at the feast, drink the strong, clear wine of festal days, and then, stretched upon their couches, await the dawning of the most ardently longed for Sabbath of the year. But these three are cut off from all who have ever loved them ; they must stretch themselves upon the cross of infamy, may drink only of the wine of bitterness, and, when their bodies are cold, they will be buried in the cold earth.

The crowd falls back before the mounted Centurion, and all pause to gaze upon the three unfortunate men who are straining and sweating beneath their awesome burdens. The two thieves are strong and more defiant, but He who comes first, the Man of Sorrows, falters at every step. Exhausted by the terrible night He has passed, by the four examinations, by the weary journey from one judge to another, by the insults, the blows and the scourging, covered with blood and sweat and racked by this last terrible effort, He no longer seems the same young and vigorous Man who but a few days since had cleared the Temple's shameful market-place with a whip. His radiant face is now convulsed with pain ; His eyes, red with unshed tears, are dull and sunken ; His clothes adhere to His lacerated shoulders and increase His sufferings ; His limbs are weak and tremble with weariness. ' The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.' Since the vigil that had been the beginning of His agony, how many blows have fallen upon that quivering flesh ! The kiss of Judas, His friends' desertion, the cords about His wrists, the judges' threats, the guards' rough handling, Pilate's cowardice, the clamouring for His death, the legionaries' abuse and now this progress beneath the cross, amidst the scorn and ridicule of those whom He loves !

The passers-by either heed Him not at all—He is but being conducted to the crucifixion He probably deserves—or seek to decipher, those of them who can read, the writing on the board He wears. Many, however, know Him either by sight or name, and point Him out to their neighbours with an air of wisdom and satisfaction. Some join the

crowd that follows Him that they may enjoy to its end the ever new spectacle of a human being's death ; and many others would do the same were it not such a busy day. Those who had begun to hope in Him now despise Him because He has displayed such weakness and allowed Himself to be taken like any thief ; and they seek to ingratiate themselves with the priests and elders who follow in the procession by hurling well-chosen abuse at the false Messiah as they pass. Some few there are whose hearts ache at sight of His misery beneath the instrument of torture He bears ; some few who are moved by the pity the common man feels for one who is condemned, or who still cherish some tenderness for the Master who loved the poor, healed the sick, and foretold a kingdom of justice, differing so widely from the kingdoms of this world. But these are but a handful, and they are somewhat ashamed of this secret tenderness for one whom they had believed to be less hated and more powerful. Happy and serene, the majority merely smile, and regard that funeral procession as part of the coming celebration.

A few women, their heads swathed in shawls, follow in the wake of the procession, keeping somewhat apart and weeping softly, but seeking to hide the tears which might be deemed a crime.

The procession was nearing the Gate of the Gardens when Jesus, whose strength is at an end, stumbled and fell, lying prone beneath the cross. His face was suddenly become as white as the driven snow, and the inflamed lids closed over His tired eyes ; had it not been for the panting breath that came from His half-closed lips, He would have seemed as one dead.

The crowd halted ; a group of men pressed close to Jesus, shouting, peering, and stretching threatening hands in His direction. The Jews who had followed Him from the palace of Caiaphas were not to be duped :—

'He is pretending!' they yell. 'Lift Him up! He is a hypocrite. He must bear His cross to the end. That is the law.'

Others cried scornfully : 'Behold the mighty king who

would have conquered the world! He cannot bear the weight of these two pieces of wood, and he would have worn armour. He pretended to be more than a mere man, and, lo, he is less than the feeblest woman, and faints at the first strain. He made the paralytic to walk, and himself cannot stand upon his feet! Force some wine between his teeth that he may regain his strength.'

But the Centurion, who, like Pilate, was anxious to have done with this unpleasant business, and who, moreover, was a man of experience, saw that Jesus would never be able to drag the cross as far as the Place of the Skull, and he looked about him for some one who might relieve Him of His load. A man from Cyrene named Simon, who was just come in from the country, seeing the waiting crowd, had edged his way into their midst and was gazing with astonishment and visible emotion upon the prostrate figure that lay stretched beneath the two beams. The Centurion seeing this man, who seemed well disposed and, what was of more importance, was robust, called out to him, saying :—

'Take up the cross, and follow us.'

Simon obeyed without a word, moved perhaps by compassion, but certainly also by necessity, for in the countries they had occupied Roman soldiers had the right to force any one to help them at any time. 'If a soldier set you a task,' Arrainus wrote, 'be careful not to refuse or even to demur, else you will be flogged.'

Of this merciful man who lent his broad peasant shoulders to relieve Jesus we have no further knowledge, but we do know that his sons, Alexander and Rufus, became Christians, and it may well have been that their father himself converted them by the story of this death of which he had been an unwilling witness.

Two soldiers raised Christ to His feet and urged Him onwards. Once more the procession started forward beneath the noontide sun. But the two thieves muttered between their teeth that no one had a thought for them, and that it was not fair to relieve this man of his burden simply because he had pretended to faint. This was open partiality, especially as he, if the speech of the priests was

to be credited, was far more guilty than themselves. From that moment even His two fellow-sufferers began to hate Him, and would continue to abuse Him even when they had been nailed to the crosses one on His right hand, the other on His left.

LXXX THE GREEN TREE

The funeral procession continued on its way towards Calvary. The women who, at first, had kept at a distance, now that the moment was at hand when they would no longer be able even to touch Him, drew near to Jesus, sobbing and weeping openly, although the priests eyed them wrathfully.

Jesus, freed from His burden, could now speak, and turning to the weeping women, He said :—

'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us ; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry ?'

He is suffering in every fibre of His body that, in a few minutes, will be hanging upon the Cross, suspended by cruel nails ; but He knows that soon He will return and break bread once more with His own Disciples, and that He will come again at the end of time to sit at the eternal banquet of the Kingdom with those who are risen from the dead. The grief of these women is a pledge of their love and He does not rebuke them, but rather than for Him they should weep for themselves, who suffer and will suffer more sorely still, and for their children who will behold the signs, the massacres and the ruins He has foretold. And thinking of those days which are so much nearer than the Doctors think who pace beside Him to enjoy His agony, He adds this unexpected and awe-inspiring Beatitude to those He had already spoken on the Mount :—

'Blessed are the barren, for they shall not suffer in their children.'

The blood invoked by the Jews will not be long in falling upon them; the streets of this very city that now casts Christ forth from its walls will run with it, and fire will not leave one stone upon another of Caiaphas' palace. Then shall the terrified inhabitants, finding no means of escape, for the besieged will be murdering one another and beyond the walls the legions of Titus will be encamped, waiting to begin the general massacre,—then shall the inhabitants of Jerusalem in their dire distress call upon the silent mountains to save them from the hand of the assassin and from Rome. But the eternal hills that, like the hearts of the deicides, are of stone, will but send back the echo of their cries, and the sons of wailing mothers will fall in pools of warm blood, which are but an infinitesimal part of the ransom due for the blood of Christ.

Punishment is fast approaching. 'For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?' The green tree is still alive, still has its roots in the cool earth, still receives the rain upon its leaves and harbours the birds amidst its branches; it is the tree that still flourishes in the warm sunshine and the fanning breeze. It is the good tree that gives its shade to the pilgrim, its fruit to the hungry, its branches to feed the fire. It is the symbol of the saint, whose gifts are for all and who carries a living soul beneath a rough exterior.

But the dry tree is barren, and the thrifty husbandman cuts it down with his axe; it is the dead trunk that is left to rot in a corner of the yard, because its heart is not sound and it is fit only to be cast upon the fire. It is the symbol of the useless and niggardly, of the sinner who yields no good fruit, who, instead of the living spirit, carries impurity in his depths, and whom the Judge will cast, as John tells us, into unquenchable fire.

If the sons and husbands of the women of Judea crucify the Innocent One who gives life, how then shall the guilty be punished who bring death?

Meanwhile the procession has reached the Place of

the Skull, and the soldiers, wielding shovel and pick, have begun to dig the holes wherein the crosses will be placed.

The Centurion has called a halt beyond the ancient walls, in the midst of the tender green of suburban gardens. The city of Caiaphas will tolerate no executions within its walls ; they might taint the air that is sweet with the virtuous exhalations of the Pharisees, and touch the tender hearts of the Sadducees ; therefore those condemned to death are cast forth to die.

They have stopped on the summit of a rounded, chalky knoll that resembles a skull in shape. This resemblance might account for the fact that this is the place set apart for executions, but the true reason is that it stands near the spot where the roads from Jaffa and Damascus intersect, and where there is always much passing of pilgrims, traders, provincials and couriers ; and it is well that the cross, destined to serve as an example and inspire terror, should be raised where it may be seen by many.

The gentle rays of the springtide sun, of the sun of high noon, enhance the chalky whiteness of the rocks, and flash upon the picks that bite noisily into the soil. In the neighbouring gardens the spring flowers are basking in the warm air ; the birds hiding in the cherry-trees send heavenwards their shafts of silvery song ; the doves are circling in pairs above this scene of warmth and of rural peace. It would be happiness indeed to dwell in such a spot, beside a well of clear water, amidst the verdure of these gardens, and to breathe the perfume of earth awakened and arraying herself in green, and await the harvest moon in the company of those we love and who love us ! Galilean days, days of peace, of sunshine and of friendship, spent between the lake and the vineyard, days of freedom and of light, of walks with the attentive listener, days ending in the quiet happiness of the supper hour, days that passed swiftly, yet seemed eternal !

Thou hast no one to bear Thee company, Jesus called the Christ. These soldiers who are preparing Thine awful bed, these thieves who insult Thee, these hounds who are

thirsting for Thy blood are but shadows come forth from the great shadow of the Almighty. Thou art alone, as unto the cruel night Thou wast alone ; and this sun which warms the backs of Thy murderers is not shining for Thee. Nor hast Thou another day before Thee ; Thou hast no farther to go ; Thy wanderings are at an end ; Thou canst rest at last. This skull of stone is Thy goal. It is here Thine imprisoned spirit shall regain its liberty when a few short hours have sped.

The human countenance of the Divine One is wet with icy sweat. The blows of the picks seem to be falling upon His throbbing head ; the sun He has so loved, the image of His Father, just, alike, to the righteous and the wicked, now blinds His eyes and scorches His trembling eyelids. His every fibre quivers ; a sense of languor and a longing for repose assail Him, against which He struggles with all His ebbing strength ; has He not promised to suffer all these things, even unto the end ? And at the same time His love for those He is leaving waxes stronger, His tenderness even for those who are preparing to put Him to death. And from the bottom of His soul, like a song of victory over the bruised and weary flesh, those words no Christian can ever forget well forth triumphant :—

' Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.'

No more divine prayer than this has ever soared heavenwards since man came into being and began to pray. It is not, indeed, the prayer of a human being, but of a God to a God. Man, who does not pardon even innocence in the innocent, had never dreamed, until that day, that one could implore pardon for them who give us death. A pardon of which ignorance indeed is the condition, but which is ever incalculably beyond the natural strength of man, unless this strength be increased by grace or transmuted by the imitation of Christ.

' For they know not what they do.' The motive limits the extent of the pardon, but this must be in order to guard one from absolving sin wilfully committed, without the guarantee of repentance. Man's ignorance is so boundless that they are few indeed who know what they do. Earthly

depravity, the tendency to imitate, habit, the passions that lurk and find their satisfaction in his darkest depths are the moving factors in man. Our will obeys even when feigning to command; conscience asserts itself only at the end, when there is nothing left but shame and ashes.

Jesus had taught them what they should know; but how many really knew? Even His own Disciples, who were alone aware that Jesus was really and truly the Christ, had been overcome by the fear of losing this last time of waiting for true life; even they had fled, had shown that they knew not what they did. And still less did the Pharisees know, they who feared to lose their supremacy, or the Doctors who feared to forfeit their privileges, or the rich who feared to lose their money, or Pilate who feared to lose his post; and less again even, the Jews, incited by their leaders, and the soldiers who obeyed their officers. Not one among them knew who Christ really was, what He was come to do, why He must suffer death. A few will know afterwards, at a late hour, and their enlightenment will come through the last prayer of Him they themselves are depriving of His life.

Now that His death is at hand, Jesus has confirmed the most divine and difficult of all His teachings—love of one's enemies—and He can now hold out His hands to be pierced by nails. The crosses are in place; they are bracing them with stones that they may not yield beneath the weight they are to sustain; and now they are treading down the earth that has been shovelled back into the holes.

The women from Jerusalem draw near to Jesus with a jug containing a mixture of wine, incense and myrrh, compounded in pity by the executioners to deaden consciousness in their Victim. For the very men who inflict suffering, feign, as a last insult, to pity the sufferer, and believe that, by lessening its contents even by a drop, they are acquiring a stronger right to force their victim to drain the chalice to its very dregs. But when Jesus had tasted of this mixture that was as bitter as gall, He quickly waved it aside. There was a single word He would have gladly accepted in place of this 'wine of consolation,' but the

only lips which uttered that word to Him were those of one of the thieves who had been dragged to Calvary with Him.

The myrrh and incense they offered Him on that last day had not the perfume of the myrrh and incense which the Wise Men had brought Him in the stable. And instead of the gold that had gleamed in the barn, there was now the steely brightness of the nails, so soon to be dyed red with His own blood. And the wine that might have been poison, so bitter was its taste, it was not the warm beverage of the marriage feast at Cana nor even the wine Christ had sipped the night before—dark wine and warm, like the blood that flows from a wound.

LXXXI FOUR NAILS

On the summit of Golgotha the three crosses, tall, dark, with widespread arms like giants waiting to embrace, stand forth against the beauty of the spring sky. They cast no shadow, but are outlined by the sun's glittering reverberation. The world is so beautiful on this day and at this hour! How can any one think of torments? Is it not possible, then, to deck those long wooden arms with wild flowers, to drape garlands of young foliage from one to another, to cover the gibbets with verdure and, stretching oneself in the shade they would then afford, pass the hours of siesta in peace and harmony with the brothers to whom one has become reconciled?

But the priests, the Scribes and the Pharisees, with their vindictive relish for cruel spectacles, are come hither to whet their appetites by the sight of the sufferings of three human beings, and, becoming impatient of the Romans' slowness, they use their sharp tongues to incite them to greater alacrity.

The Centurion gives an order, and immediately two soldiers begin to divest Jesus of His clothes, handling Him roughly in the process. He who is to be crucified must be stark naked—'as one who steps into a bath,' says an ancient writer.

As soon as they have taken His garments off they pass

two ropes beneath His arm-pits and hoist Him on to the cross. Half-way up there is a narrow ledge which serves as a seat whereon the body rests precariously and painfully. Another legionary places a ladder against one of the arms of the cross, mounts it, hammer in hand, seizes the hand that has healed lepers and caressed the heads of little children, strains it against the wood and points a nail in the centre of the palm. The nails used are long and have large, flat heads that are easy to hit. The improvised blacksmith strikes a first blow that immediately drives the point through the flesh, and follows this up with two more, that the nail may have firm hold, and the head only remain visible. A little blood spurts from the pierced hand on to the hand of the soldier, but the busy workman does not notice this, and continues to hammer upon his tender anvil until the work is done to his satisfaction. Then he descends and goes to repeat the same operation on the other hand.

The crowd have held their breath, hoping to hear the shrieks the Victim would certainly utter. But Jesus is as silent in the hands of His executioners as He was before His judges.

Now the feet must be made fast. This can be done standing on the ground, for the crosses of the Romans are not very high ; indeed, if the bodies are left hanging for any length of time, dogs and jackals come and rend them.

The soldier bends Jesus' knees slightly upwards, that the soles of His feet may rest flat against the wood, and, having felt carefully for the right place between two bones, drives a nail through one foot, hammering away until it is fast. The same operation is repeated on the other foot, and then the soldier, stepping back, glances upwards, hammer still in hand, to satisfy himself that his work is neatly and thoroughly done. But he has forgotten the inscription which had been removed from Jesus' neck, and flung upon the ground. The man picks it up, mounts his ladder once more, and nails it above the thorn-crowned Head, in full view of all the spectators.

Then, descending from the ladder, he casts aside his hammer, and turns to see if his companions have also

finished their tasks. The two thieves are in their respective places and the crosses have received their offerings of flesh. Now the soldiers may rest and divide the garments their victims will never need again. The clothes were the executioners' perquisites, were theirs by law. The four legionaries to whom Jesus' garments now belong, divide them into four parts, but the tunic still remains. It has no seams, being woven in one piece, and it seems a pity to cut it, for then it will be of no use to any one. One of the four solves the problem. Bringing out his dice he flings them into his helmet—as did Virgil's archers—and the four proceed to cast lots with a view to acquiring the tunic. The King of the Jews possesses now nothing in this world save the crown of thorns they have left upon His head in supreme derision.

All is accomplished ; the blood drips slowly from His hands, and that which flows from His feet runs down the wood of the cross in red lines. Now, indeed, He cannot escape ; His mouth will remain speechless for all time. The murderers may congratulate both themselves and the foreign executioners. He who had poisoned the minds of the people, who was the Enemy of the Temple and of the shop, has, by means of four strong nails, been made fast to the tree of ignominy. Henceforth the lords of Jerusalem may rest in peace and security.

The crowd at the foot of the mound burst into derisive, fiendish laughter, and words of cruel vituperation mingle with shouts of satisfaction and approval. He hangs there, the bird of ill-omen, nailed fast, as the peasant would nail an owl to his door. The Mendicant who needed but one cloak is now stark naked ; the Wanderer who had not even a stone whereon to lay His head has now a pillow of wood ; the hand of the Impostor who deceived by His miracles is no longer free to mould the clay that restored his sight to the blind man ; the King has a hard wooden ledge for a throne ; He who hated Jerusalem hangs in sight of the holy city ; the Master of so many disciples has now for company only a couple of thieves who insult and abuse Him, and four soldiers, impatient to be off. 'Call upon

Thy Father to save Thee, to send a legion of angels to remove Thee hence and scatter us with a fiery sword. Then we also will believe that Thou wast the Christ and we will bow down in the dust and worship Thee.'

And some of the priests cry out to Him :—

'Ah, thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross!'

This exhortation reminds one of that of Satan in the desert. Like him, these men demand a miracle. How often have they not asked for a sign! 'What a mighty token would it be shouldst Thou succeed in tearing out the nails and descending from the Cross; should Thy Father's power shine forth in the sky and strike us down for deicides. But, as Thou well knowest, the nails are strong, and no one appears either in the sky or on earth to help Thee.'

All deride Him, the Scribes, the Elders, even the soldiers, who are in no wise concerned in this episode, and the very thieves who are suffering as is He Himself.

'He saved others; himself he cannot save,' they cry. 'If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God.'

'He declared unto us that He was come to give life, and, lo, He Himself cannot escape death! He boasted that He was the Son of God, and the Almighty lifts not a finger to free His First-Born from the cross. Therefore He has lied in all things. It is not true that He has saved many; it is not true that God is His Father; and as He has lied on these points, so also has He lied on all others, and He deserves His fate. This last proof was superfluous, yet it has been sent; a clear proof that all may comprehend. Verily our consciences may be at rest. At this hour, were a miracle possible, He would no longer be hanging there in agony; but the sky is empty, and God's sun still sheds its light that we may see the spasms that distort His face, and the heaving of His chest.

'A pity indeed, that the Romans have abolished our ancient punishment for blasphemers; we might have

vented our indignation more thoroughly had we been allowed to stone Thee, and each one would have had a share in the game, aiming at Thy head, inflicting grievous wounds, cutting deep into the flesh, drawing blood, arraying Thee in a tunic of stone and finally burying Thee beneath a heap of rocks. On one occasion, in the presence of the adulteress, the stones fell from our hands, but to-day no one would have faltered and Thou wouldst have paid both for her and for Thyself. The cross is well enough, but it affords the spectators too little satisfaction. If these foreigners had even allowed us to drive the nails ourselves! Thou hast naught to say for Thyself? Hast Thou lost all desire to preach? Wilt Thou not come down? Why not convert us also? If we are to love Thee, show us first that the Almighty love Thee enough to perform a great miracle and wrest Thee from death!'

But the divine Sufferer is silent. The agony of the fever that has set in is less terrible than the words of these His brothers who are crucifying Him a second time on the cross of their appalling ignorance.

LXXXII DISMAS

The thieves who had been crucified with Jesus had begun to hate Him when, on the way to Golgotha, He had been relieved of His cross. No one had a thought for them; no one cared, although they were going to suffer the same penalty; it is true every one was abusing Jesus, but at least He was being noticed and people were running to see Him only. This crowd was following solely on His account, and it contained important personages, learned and rich men; the women were weeping for Him alone, and even the Centurion was moved to compassion. He, Jesus, was the King of the solemnity, He attracted every one's attention as were He a king indeed. Perhaps they might not even have had the wine and myrrh given to them, had this Man not scorned it.

But when his fellow-sufferer of whom he was so jealous uttered the mighty words: 'Father, forgive them, for they

know not what they do,' one of the thieves fell suddenly silent. That prayer was strange to him and suggested sentiments foreign to his spirit, to his whole life! It carried him back, all unexpectedly, to a time he had almost forgotten, to a time when even he was innocent and knew that there was a God to whom one might pray for peace, as the poor ask for bread at the door of the rich. No hymn that he could recall, however, contained any such petition as this, a petition so unusual, so absurd in the mouth of one about to die! Yet these extraordinary words went straight to the heart of the hardened miscreant, and touched something into life there that he would have liked to be able to believe, especially now. Jesus' prayer blended wonderfully with thoughts he would have been incapable of putting into words. Had he really known what he was doing? And had others had any thought for him, done for him what was necessary, in order to wean him from evil? Had any one really loved him; was there any one who would have fed him when he was hungry, given him a cloak when he was cold, a friendly word when his solitary, embittered soul was assailed by temptation? Had he had enough to eat, and had he been better loved, would he have committed the crimes that had brought him to Calvary? Was not he one of those who know not what they do, whose spirit is darkened by need, who are left to face their lurking passions alone? Were they not thieves, even as was he himself, these Levites who trafficked in offerings, these Pharisees who defrauded the widow, these rich men who, by their usury, bled even the poorest? They, indeed, had condemned him to death; but what right had they to slay him, they who had done naught to save him, who were themselves sullied with his own crime?

Such thoughts as these were emerging from his troubled consciousness as he waited to be nailed to the cross. The nearness of death—of a death so horrible—that amazing prayer, uttered by one who was not a thief but must suffer the same punishment, the hatred that disfigured the faces of those who had condemned him also, stirred his lacerated and unhappy soul and inclined it to sentiments to which

he had been a stranger since his early youth, to sentiments he could not have named, but that closely resembled repentance and love.

When all three had been nailed to the cross, the other thief once more began to revile Jesus, and from his mouth, half hidden by his matted beard, there issued the same challenge the Jews had hurled against Him :—

'If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.'

Were He indeed the Son of God would He not seek to save His companions in misfortune? Why was He not moved to pity? Certainly those people down below were right—He was an accursed impostor, one whom all had abandoned. And the angry thief's contempt gathered strength from the disappointment of a hope that had failed—the vague, impossible hope of being saved by a miracle. But he who is desperate hopes even for what he knows to be impossible, and this disappointment seemed almost an act of betrayal to the miserable man.

But the Good Thief, who for some time had been listening to his companion's abuse and to what those other rabid beings down below were saying, now turned to his fellow-sufferer and said :—

'Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss.'

Through his doubts concerning his own sin the thief has reached the certainty of the innocence of this mysterious Being who pardons, and who now hangs by his side. 'We have committed acts'—he will not call them crimes—'that men punish, but this man has done nothing amiss, yet he must suffer as do we ourselves; why, then, should we revile him? Dost thou not fear that God will punish thee for having abused one who is innocent?'

He recalled all he had heard concerning Jesus, not much indeed, and the meaning of it all not very clear to him, but he understood that this Man had talked of a kingdom of peace and had said that He Himself would return to rule over it. And presently, moved by a sudden wave of faith, he pronounced these words :—

'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.'

And Christ, who had vouchsafed no answer to any one else, turned His head painfully towards the converted thief, and answered :—

'Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'

He cannot promise him anything in this world, and what would it profit him indeed to be freed from the cross and to drag himself, for a few short years, bruised and needy, along life's highway ? Moreover, he has not asked to be saved from death, as does the other. He is satisfied to be remembered after death, when Jesus shall have entered into glory. Instead of the fleeting life of the flesh, the Master promises him life eternal, Paradise, and that immediately, this very day. He has sinned indeed ; in the eyes of men he has sinned grievously. He has taken some of their wealth from the rich—perhaps, also, he may have stolen from the poor. But Jesus has always been especially tender with sinners, who are afflicted with a disease far more terrible than any of the flesh. He has never displayed this tenderness with ostentation, but He has also never sought to dissimulate it. Was He not come to bring back to the warm fold those sheep which had lost their way amidst the brambles of the hillside ? Are the wicked not punished sufficiently by their own sin ? And as for those who deem themselves virtuous and condemn others, are they not often more corrupt than the sinners themselves ? Christ does not pardon all ; that would be a further injustice, more godlike than the other, but nevertheless an injustice. But one single act of repentance, one word of regret was enough for Him. The thief's prayer sufficed to absolve him.

The Good Thief was Jesus' last convert in the flesh.

We know nothing further concerning this man, only his name has come down to us through an apocryphal writer. The Church, on the strength of Jesus' promise, has enrolled him among her saints under the name of Dismas.

Jesus' breathing was becoming ever more painful. His chest heaved with the effort to draw in a little more air; His temples throbbed violently; the thirst-bringing fever of the crucified consumed Him, as were the blood in His veins turned into liquid fire. Stretched in that agonizing position, fastened to the wood and unable to find relief in changing position, suspended by His hands that were rent more deeply whenever, for an instant, He allowed His muscles to relax; hanging thus, His young, His divine body, that had so often been strained to contain a soul too great for it, was now become a flaming pyre of suffering that contained all the world's pain.

According to an executioner who was also somewhat of a rhetorician and who was murdered before the days of Christ, crucifixion was indeed the most cruel and terrible of punishments; that which caused the longest and most awful suffering. When tetanus supervened a merciful state of torpor ensued, and death came more quickly; but certain victims lived for four-and-twenty hours and even longer in ever-increasing agony, withstanding the thirst occasioned by fever, the congestion of the heart, the stiffening of the arteries, the cramps that twisted every muscle, and the dizziness and blinding pain in the head. But generally death came within twelve hours.

The blood from the four wounds of Jesus had dried around the heads of the nails, but every spasm of His body caused fresh blood to flow slowly down the wood of the cross to the ground. His head hung sideways upon its aching neck; His eyes, those mortal eyes, whence a God had looked forth upon the world, were dimmed by the glaze of His agony; and His pale lips, parched with thirst and contracted by His agony, revealed the effects of the last kiss they had received, the accursed kiss of Judas.

Thus dies a God who has delivered the feverish of their fever, who has given the water of life to the thirsty, who has raised the dead from their beds and brought them forth from the tomb, who has restored the power of motion to

the paralysed, who has cast out devils from beings who were become as beasts, who has wept with them who sorrowed, who gave new life to the sinner instead of punishment, who taught by His miracles and by His words that perfect love which man—drowsy, brutish man, encompassed by delirium and blood—would never have been capable of discovering for himself. He healed the wounds of others, and His own body has been grievously wounded; He forgave sinners, and He who is stainless has been nailed to the cross by sinners, between two sinners; He loved all men with surpassing love, even the unworthy, and hatred has nailed Him here where hatred is punished; He has been more just than justice itself, and the greatest of all injustices has been perpetrated against Him; He has sought to convert the bestial to holiness, and He is Himself fallen into the hands of demons; He who brought life is given the most shameful of deaths.

All this was necessary that man might again find the road to salvation; that he might rise above sensualism and know the spiritual ecstasy of the saints; that he might be resurrected from that state of feeble inertia that has the appearance of life but is in reality death, and be prepared for the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Our intellect is staggered by the awesome and inviolable mystery that enshrouds this necessity, but let not the heart of man forget the price that was paid for our redemption. For nineteen centuries all who have been reborn in Christ, who are worthy to know Christ, to love Christ and be loved by Him, have wept at least once in their lives at the memory of this day, of this suffering. But not all of our tears collected in one great sea of bitterness would be sufficient compensation for a single drop of the blood that fell from the cross on Golgotha.

A barbarian who was king of a nation of barbarians uttered the strongest word that ever fell from Christian lips at the thought of that blood. They were reading the story of the Passion to Clovis, when the fierce monarch, who could not restrain his tears, suddenly grasped the hilt of his sword and exclaimed: 'Ah, had I but been there with

my Franks ! ' Ingenuous words, the words of a soldier and of a man of violent deeds, that are contrary to Christ's words to Peter in the Garden of Olives, but beautiful words, nevertheless, with the absurd beauty of a pure and vigorous love. For it is not enough to weep over Him who gave not only tears ; it is necessary to act as well ; to combat within ourselves all that separates us from Christ ; to combat all the enemies of Christ who are in our midst.

For if, since then, millions have wept at the thought of that day, on that fatal Friday all those who stood around the cross—all save the women—laughed. And those who laughed are not yet all dead ; they have left children and their children's children, and many of these are baptized indeed, who still laugh, standing in our midst ; and their descendants will continue to laugh until the day whereon One only will be able to laugh. If tears cannot wash away the blood, what suffering will ever be sufficient expiation for that outburst of mirth !

Look again at those who stand laughing at the foot of the cross whereon hangs the Christ in agony.

See how they stretch their wicked muzzles towards Him, look at their coarse necks, their hooked and crooked noses ; see how they devour the spectacle with greedy eyes that peer forth from beneath their bushy eyebrows. Observe how revolting they are in their unconscious attitude of insatiate bloodthirstiness. Count them carefully, for they are all here, precisely resembling those with whom we are familiar, brothers of those we find every day in our path. Not one is missing.

In the first row are the Bonzes with their well-filled bellies and hearts of leather, their big ears, and their wide, thick lips and mouths whence flows blasphemy. And rubbing elbows with them are the Scribes, arrogant, rheumy, and glandulose, loathsomely yellow of face, inventors of lies. Then there are the gluttons, brutes who trade on hunger, who wax fat in times of famine, who convert into coin the patience of the poor, the beauty of innocent maidenhood, the sweat of slaves. And here are the scurrilous money-lenders, skilled in harrying and in all unlawful traffic, who

live but to pander and despoil ; and the unbending legists, who know so well how to use the law against the innocent. Behind these proud pillars of society crowd the mass of base knaves, of lusty rogues, of loose-tongued brawlers, of yelping vagabonds, of blackguards—all the wolfish riff-raff who scramble for leavings beneath the table or snarl about the legs of him who neither flings them a morsel nor kicks them out of his way.

And out of the impurity of its heart this unclean, loathsome and thieving scum of humanity breathes its scorn for Him who seeks to save it, rends Him who pardons, hurls abuse at the Christ who is agonizing, who is dying, for its redemption. Never as on that day of irreparable calamity were good and evil, innocence and infamy, light and darkness brought into such tragic, such compelling contrast.

Nature herself rebelled at the horror of this vision. The clear, bright sky of the morning suddenly became dark. A thick mist that might have risen from the marshes of hell itself loomed behind the surrounding hills, and spread gradually between Heaven and Earth. Black clouds covered the sun, that bright and gentle sun that had warmed the murderers' hands ; encompassed it, pressed in upon it, and finally hid it behind a thick curtain of gloom.

'And there was darkness over the land until the ninth hour.'

LXXXIV LAMA SABACHTHANI

Many, terrified by the coming of this darkness, fled from Golgotha and returned silently to their homes. Not all, however. The atmosphere was still ; the rain had not yet begun to fall, and the three pale bodies could still be distinguished, looming white amidst the shadows. Those who remained wished to enjoy the agony until the end ; why leave the theatre before the tragedy is over ? And they strained their ears in the darkness to catch any words the hated Actor might mingle with His groans.

His sufferings increased each second. His delicate body,

exhausted by the tension of recent days, convulsed by the struggle of the preceding night, tortured during these last hours, could bear no more. His spirit was undergoing an agony worse still than that of the body that still held it imprisoned. It seemed to Jesus that mankind had forsaken Him now for all time, and His divinely childlike soul grew suddenly old, weighed down by an old age devoid of memories. All had abandoned Him; the companions of happy years, those upon whom He had bestowed His tenderness, the poor who had regarded Him with affection, the little ones who had sought His caresses, those He had healed and who had clung to Him, the Disciples to whom He had given a new soul. There now remained with Him only a handful of wild fiends awaiting His death.

Women only had remained by Him. Standing apart at some distance from the cross for fear of that crowd of howling men, were Mary His Mother, Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Salome the mother of John and James, and perhaps also Joanna the wife of Chuza and Martha, all waiting in agony for His end. Jesus still had the strength to bequeath to John the one precious and sacred possession that remained to Him on earth—His suffering mother. But after that the veil of His own tears shut out all from His sight, and He was left alone in death as He had been alone at the most solemn crises of His life. Where was now the loving, the tender Father upon whom He had ever called in the certainty of an answer? Why did He not comfort Him by a sign of His presence, by calling Him to Himself, by putting an end to this agony?

It was at this moment that, amidst the great silence and darkness, these words were heard :—

'*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* My God. my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

It was the first verse of a psalm He had so often repeated to Himself, finding it so full of prophetic meaning concerning both His life and His death. He no longer had the strength to repeat the whole of it as he had done in the desert, but one by one its fervent invocations returned to His troubled mind.

'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me and from the words of my roaring? . . . Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee and were delivered. . . . But I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. But thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me.'

The supplications contained in this prophetic psalm, that so vividly recall Isaiah's 'Man of Sorrows,' rise from the depths of Jesus' sorrowing heart, a last outpouring of His dying humanity.

But some of the fiends who stood nearest to the cross thought He was calling upon the ever-living prophet Elias, whom popular imagination connected with the coming of the Messiah.

'This man calleth for Elias,' they said.

At that moment one of the soldiers took a sponge, dipped it in vinegar, and, with a reed, held it to Jesus' lips.

But the Jews cried out:—

'Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.'

The legionary, wishing to avoid trouble, withdrew his

reed, and presently, although to them who stood waiting in darkness and painful suspense time seemed to stand still, the voice of Christ was heard once more, seeming to come from afar off, and saying :—

'I thirst.'

Again the legionary took the sponge and, having dipped it in the mixture of vinegar and water that was the beverage of the Roman soldiers, once more pressed it to those parched lips that had prayed that he also might be pardoned. But hardly had they touched it when Jesus cried :—

'It is finished!'

The eternal Dispenser of spiritual refreshment who had so often stilled the thirst of others and who was leaving in the world a fountain of life that will never be exhausted, a fount wherein the weary may renew their strength, the defiled their youth and the restless find peace, had been tormented throughout life by His insatiate thirst for love ; and even now the thirst of the fever that is consuming Him is not for water, but for a word of pity that shall break the oppression of His loneliness and desolation. Instead of the pure water of the streams of Galilee, instead of the generous wine of the Last Supper, the Roman offers Him a sip of his own sour beverage ; but this obscure slave's kind and quick response to His appeal sufficed to show Him, although His mind was already groping amidst the shadows of death, that one heart, at least, had gone out to Him in pity.

The fact that a stranger whom He had never seen before to-day had done something, even so slight a thing, for Him is a sign that the Father has not utterly forsaken Him. The chalice is empty—all its bitterness is vanished. With the end, eternity begins. And gathering His last strength He sent forth a loud cry that pierced the darkness :—

'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.'

And having cried aloud once more, Jesus bowed His head and gave up the ghost. This last cry, so mighty as to free the soul from its prison-house of flesh, re-echoed throughout the darkness and was lost in the vast spaces of the earth. At that cry, Matthew tells us, 'the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom ; and the earth

did quake, and the rocks rent ; and the graves were opened ; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves . . . and appeared unto many.' But the hearts of the spectators were harder than the rocks themselves ; and they who appeared to be alive, but were really dead, will not rise from their graves at the summons of the Last Trump.

Nearly nineteen centuries have passed since that cry rang out, and in his efforts to drown it, man has multiplied a thousandfold the noise and tumult of existence. But amidst the fog and smoke of our cities, amidst the ever-growing darkness wherein man lights the fires of his misery, that final cry of joy and liberation, that all-encompassing cry that is a summons to each one of us, still re-echoes in the hearts of them who have not been able to forget.

Christ is dead. He has died upon the cross the death that man decreed, that the Son chose, that the Father accepted. The agony is over and the Jews are satisfied. He has suffered all things and is dead. Now is the hour come for our expiation—and it is not yet accomplished.

LXXXV BLOOD AND WATER

Christ is dead at last : He has died the death the leaders of His people desired for Him, and not even that last cry of His has awakened them. A few, Luke says, went away smiting their breasts ; but did those breasts really contain hearts that ached for the great heart that had ceased to beat ? In silence they hurried away to their homes and the feast ; they may have been filled with awe, but it was not love they felt.

A stranger, the Centurion Petronius, who had been a silent witness at the execution, was awakened at last, and from his pagan lips there fell the same words Claudia Procula had spoken :—

' Certainly this was a righteous man.'

He is unaware of the dead Man's true title, but he is convinced that, at least, He was no evil-doer. This soldier was the third Roman to testify to the innocence of Him

who was destined to become, through the Apostles, eternally Roman.

As for the Jews, however, they had no thought of recantation; their one preoccupation now was that the paschal feast should not be spoiled, that these bodies be speedily disposed of. Evening was fast approaching, and at sunset the Great Sabbath would begin. Word was therefore sent to Pilate that he must have the victims' legs broken and their bodies buried without delay. The *Crurifragium* was one of cruelty's cruel contrivances for shortening the sufferings of the crucified—a form of kindness that was convenient when the executioners were pressed for time. The soldiers, having received their orders, approached the two thieves and shattered their knees and thighs with their swords.

They had seen Jesus die, and could therefore spare themselves the trouble of inflicting further injury upon Him; one of them, however, who was overscrupulous, so John says, took his lance and drove it deep into the Victim's side. To his amazement, blood and water flowed from the wound.

According to an ancient tradition the soldier's name was Longinus, and it is said that a few drops of blood spattered upon his eyes which were sore, and immediately healed them; and martyrology further relates that from that hour Longinus believed in Christ, and becoming a monk in the course of time, dwelt for eight-and-twenty years at Cæsarea, until he was finally put to death for his faith. Claudia Procula, the merciful legionary who wet the dying lips for the last time, the Centurion Petronius and Longinus were the first of the Gentiles to open their hearts to Christ on the very day whereon Jerusalem cast Him forth.

Not all of the Jews, however, had forgotten Him. Now that He was really dead; now that He lay cold and still in death; now that He was become but a speechless, inoffensive, quiet, soulless corpse; now that His voice was hushed and that His heart had ceased to beat, His friends of the twenty-fifth hour ventured forth from their houses, where they had been hiding since the preceding night—slothful followers, secret disciples, admirers who desired

not to be known as such, those who hide their light under a bushel at night and disappear by day when the sun shines. We have all known friends of this description, cautious souls who tremble at thought of what the world may say, who follow us, but only at a distance, who recognize us, but only when there is no one to see, who esteem us, but not sufficiently to confess their esteem to any one but themselves, who love us, but not to the extent of sacrificing an hour's sleep or a single penny to help us. But when death overtakes us, then their time is come. They are the ones who shed most tears, which they have taken care to keep in store for this event; they are the ones whose busy hands wind the richest garlands and who prepare the finest flowers of funeral rhetoric, and it is touching and edifying indeed to observe with what tenderness and thoughtful solicitude they prepare themselves to fill the rôles of mourners, necrologists, epigraphists or commentators. Judging by their fervour one would almost say that the deceased could have had no more faithful companions than these, and compassionate souls are moved to pity for the bereaved beings who seem to have lost half of their very selves.

It was Jesus' misfortune, both in life and death, to possess many friends of this stamp, and two such ones appeared upon the scene on that very Friday evening. They were a couple of grave and worthy men, well known in Jerusalem and in the Council; two rich men (as a rule all such friends are rich), two members of the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. In order to avoid staining their hands with Christ's blood, these two had not appeared at the assembly of their order. They had shut themselves up at home, probably heaving a mournful sigh from time to time, and thus saving both their reputation and their conscience. But they had failed to reflect that complicity, even when passive, furthers the murderer's purpose, and that to abstain from offering opposition when one has the power to do so is equivalent to acquiescence. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus therefore, although absent and non-consentient, had been parties to the condemnation of Christ, and their posthumous grief, while it

may have lessened their guilt, could not relieve them of their responsibility.

And so when evening was come, when their colleagues, who might have been shocked by their act, were finally satisfied and had departed from Golgotha ; when there was no longer any danger of compromising themselves in the eyes of the clerical and high financial aristocracy, because the Victim was dead and would cause no further trouble, the two nocturnal disciples ' arranged secretly for fear of the Jews ' to relieve their own remorse by providing for Jesus' burial.

The braver of the two, Joseph, ' went in *boldly* unto Pilate ' (as Mark relates, thus emphasizing an act of unaccustomed courage on the part of this togated rabbit) and asked for the body of Christ. Pilate, astonished that He was already dead, for frequently the crucified lived for two days, sent for Petronius who had presided at the execution, and having heard his report, ' gave ' the body over to the Councillor. The Governor was generous on this occasion, for as a rule the Roman magistrate made the relatives pay for the body ; but he could not well refuse this favour to a personage of wealth and importance, and perhaps also his act was determined as much by exasperation as by honesty. They had worried him all the morning with that troublesome King of theirs, who, even now that He was dead, would not leave him, Pilate, in peace !

Having obtained the sought-for permission, Joseph provided himself with a winding-sheet of fine linen and the necessary bandages, and set out for the Place of the Skull. On the way he met Nicodemus, his friend by reason of their common sentiment, who was going to Golgotha for a like purpose. Nicodemus also had been spending regardless of expense, and had a servant with him who bore upon his shoulders one hundred pounds of a mixture of myrrh and aloes.

Arrived at the spot where the crosses stood they prepared to remove the body of Jesus. In the meanwhile the soldiers took down the bodies of the two thieves, which would be cast into a grave common to all who suffered death at the hands of the law.

With the help of Nicodemus and of a few others, Joseph drew the nails from the feet of Christ, finding this a difficult task, so firmly had they been driven in. The ladder was still at hand, a man climbed it and, supporting Jesus' body upon his shoulder, removed the nails from His hands. Others helping, Christ was finally lowered to the ground and laid upon the knees of the Sorrowing Mother who had borne Him. Presently all was ready; they set out for the garden, where there was a cave destined to become Jesus' tomb. The garden was the property of the wealthy Joseph, who had had the cave prepared for himself and his kindred, for at that time every Jew in easy circumstances had his family tomb far from all others, and the dead were not condemned to the promiscuity of our official, geometrical, temporary and democratic cemeteries, that are so perfectly in keeping with the ostentation of our modern barbarism.

On their reaching the garden the two distinguished undertakers ordered water to be drawn from the well, and set about washing Jesus' Body. The women, the three Maries—the Virgin, she who had sat in contemplation, and she who had been delivered from sin—had never left the spot where their Beloved had died. They, whose touch was more tender and who were better skilled in such matters, helped to make this improvised and hurried burial worthy of Him for whom they wept. It fell to them to remove the shameful crown Pilate's legionaries had platted, and to tear out the thorns that had penetrated so deep into His flesh; they smoothed and curled His hair that was matted with blood, they closed those eyes whose pure and tender gaze had so often rested upon them, and the mouth that had never been theirs. Loving tears fell upon His face, which in the calm pallor of death had resumed its habitual sweetness of expression, cleansing it with purer water than that drawn from Joseph's well.

They washed His body, sullied with sweat, blood and dust; from the wounds of His hands and feet, from His side there still oozed blood mixed with water. The washing ended, they sprinkled perfumes, those Nicodemus had

brought, and the black holes left by the nails were filled with them. Since that evening when the Magdalene, in anticipation of this hour, had poured out her nard upon His head and feet, the body of Jesus had received only blows and spit. But now His pale corpse was again anointed with perfumes and with tears more precious than any precious ointment.

When the sweet-smelling coverlet Nicodemus had provided had been spread upon Him, the sheet was wrapped round Him and bound in place by long bandages of fine linen ; His head was covered with a cloth, and on His face after all had kissed His brow, they placed another napkin.

The cave, which had been recently excavated, was open, and contained but one ' doculus,' and no one had ever been laid to rest therein. Joseph of Arimathea, who had failed to open his door to Jesus while He yet lived, now that the world's wrath was over, bestowed upon Him this dark resting-place that had been prepared for the reception of his own body. According to custom the two Councillors recited the funeral psalms, and finally, having tenderly deposited the white form within the tomb, they closed the entrance with a great stone and went silently away, followed by the others.

But the women remained behind. They could not bear to leave that stone that separated them from One they had loved better than their own beauty. How could they leave Him alone in the twofold darkness of the tomb and of night, leave Him who had been so desperately alone throughout His long agony ? They remained, praying silently, reminding one another of a day or a gesture, or recalling a word their Beloved had spoken ; and if one sought to comfort another, that other did but sob more bitterly. From time to time they would press against the stone and call upon His name, and murmur, now that His ears were closed by death and encompassed by thick folds of linen, all those tender things they had never dared to say to Him in life ; and in the darkness that surrounded them they poured out at last that flood of love, greater than love itself, their poor hearts could no longer contain.

Finally, however, overcome by cold and the terrors of the night, they also went their way, their eyes hot with weeping, stumbling at each step amongst the bushes and the stones, but promising one another to return on the morrow of the feast.

LXXXVI 'HE PREACHED UNTO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON'

At last Christ's tortured body had been laid to rest upon a perfumed couch within the cave in Joseph's garden, but His spirit, freed from the flesh, was not resting. He had brought the Good Tidings to the living, and they had repaid Him with death; now the time was come to carry the message to the dead who, for untold ages, had been waiting for this day in the depths of Sheol.

We possess no certain revelation of this descent into Hell, but in one of the most ancient apocryphal compositions, the Gospel of Peter, we read that those who witnessed the Crucifixion heard a voice in heaven saying: 'Hast thou announced the obedience to them who sleep?' And from the cross the answer came: 'Yea.' Again, in the First Epistle of Peter, we find confirmation of this preaching to them who slept: '. . . being put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing. . . . For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.' And Paul himself, who knew more concerning divine things than he was allowed to tell, declares that Christ 'also descended first into the lower parts of the earth.' The Symbol of the Apostles has confirmed the ancient Christian certitude beyond appeal.

The peoples of antiquity had invented more than one fable concerning a descent into the nether world. At Babylon they told how Istar had ventured into the awesome region of Nergal to rescue her Tammuz; and also of the

hero Izdubar's journey thither to ask the wise Sitnapistim for the secret of eternal youth. In Greece the poets told of Hercules that he had descended into Tartarus by a cave near Mount Tænarus and brought back, as a trophy, the awful Cerberus. They also told how Theseus and Pirithous had ventured into the same region to bring Proserpine back among the living; how Dionysus, among his many deeds of daring, had descended into the nether world to rescue his mother Semele; how Orpheus went thither to beg Eurydice from Pluto; of Ulysses who penetrated into the world of shadows to consult Tiresias concerning his return to his country; of Æneas who is led into the infernal regions to afford Virgil an opportunity of praising heroes as yet unborn. It was also rumoured that Pythagoras had once visited Hades, but the only account we possess of his journey is a late parody.

In all these fables concerning fabulous personages we see that the heroes either wished merely to display their own daring and courage or to ascertain something that was of importance to themselves only, as was the case with Izdubar and Ulysses; or, more frequently, that they desired to free some being from death who was dear to themselves only. And sometimes, as in the Æneid, the fables were mere literary expedients. But not one of them went to rescue the forgotten dead, to deliver them from the powers of the nether world, to bear to them also the tidings of a higher life. In order to intimidate the door-keeper of Arallu, Istar threatens to raise the dead, but for what savage purposes! 'I will raise the dead,' cries the daughter of the moon-god Sin, 'that they may go forth and devour the living, and thus will the dead become more numerous than the living.'

In these eminently human conceptions of popular mythology there is nothing even remotely reminiscent of the descent of Christ. He is moved by the divine impulse of a justice that knows no human divisions of time. Amongst those who sleep the sleep of the earth there are others beside the mere brute who knew nothing beyond his ox and his female; the depraved, who had stained their souls

with all the sins of the flesh and their hands with their brothers' blood; the slothful who had warmed themselves in the sun, without seeing in that dazzling orb the image of an exorable Father; the rich who had no other gods than Property and Trade; the kings who had been not shepherds but devourers of peoples, as Achilles said in his wrath; the idolaters who, blinded by abominable superstitions, had thought to earn the favour of the gods by worshipping stone images, by wallowing in the drunken revelry of lascivious orgies, or by slaying men and beasts; the self-satisfied, who, reposing at ease upon the literality of coarse, primitive laws, had esteemed themselves perfect in a perfect world, and had neither hoped for nor had the faintest inkling of a future renewal.

There were those also (although they were but few, and scattered throughout the boundless cemeteries of the centuries) who, without the help of complete revelation, had attained to a purity of life which, although still far removed from perfection, yet resembled perfection as the dark outline of the shadow resembles the brightly-coloured, breathing body. Some of these had been not only the authors of the first laws and of precarious human alliances, but had also brought them to greater perfection, had sometimes even succeeded in surpassing them. The greatest among them were those who had formed the savage tribes of the early world into a single people, amongst whom the fierce right to wage war without quarter was at least mitigated and held in check; others had delivered their people from foreign bondage or had taught the arts that render life less difficult and those that may for an instant make man forget his pain. From time to time a man had risen above the writhing mass of bestiality and rottenness, a man of nobler temper, who had not grudged the poor their fire and their loaf, who had conquered his own flesh, tamed his baser passions, and sought, albeit confusedly and painfully, to obey an inner law that was the vague dawning of holiness. And finally the people Christ chose for His own had had the Patriarchs, loving guardians of the family and the flock; the Law Givers, who received God's com-

mandments upon the mountain-top and in the midst of flames; the Prophets, who, for so many centuries and with such fervour and longing, had foretold the coming of the Liberator, who would banish the world's pain and injustice as the wind banishes the heavy clouds that hang above the valleys.

Jesus' descent into the boundless realms of the dead was necessary, was at once an obligation of justice and of love, for the sake of these few who had possessed certain attributes of sanctity before the saints themselves, who had helped mankind before the Saviour's advent, who had prophesied Christ and smoothed His way, those whose hearts had contained the germ of Christianity even before the Advent of the Lord. He of whom they had prophesied without knowing His name, for whom they had waited but had never seen so long as they dwelt in the light of the sun, remembered them when He awoke to true life within the cave, and descended to deliver them, to take them with Him into His glory.

An ancient apocryphal text describes this descent, describes how the gates were burst asunder, tells of the victory over Satan, of the joy of the righteous under the old dispensation, and of the ascension of the little band into Paradise. And while they were still exulting at finding Enoch and Elijah there, who, unlike themselves, had not died, but had been taken up into heaven while they were still quick, lo, a man came towards them naked and covered with blood, and bearing a cross upon his shoulder. It was the thief who had repented and received Christ's promise on Golgotha. These, indeed, are but images that contain more of beauty than of certainty, but the Christian tradition, while it does not pretend to know the true story of the descent into Hell and the names of those who were delivered therefrom, has nevertheless placed the bringing of the Gospel to the dead among its articles of faith, and thirteen centuries later, amidst the vapours of Hell, the shade of Virgil could remind Dante of the coming of '. . . a Mighty one, With sign of victory incoronate.'

LXXXVII 'HE IS NOT HERE . . .'

The sun had not yet risen on that day which to us is Sunday when the women set forth for the garden; but above the hills in the east there hovered a pale promise, as vague as the distant shining of a land decked in silver and lilies, a promise that was advancing slowly amidst the twinkling constellations, and gradually dimming the brilliancy of the night. It was one of those serene dawnings that remind one of sleeping innocence; the hour when the pure and limpid atmosphere seems still to vibrate with the recent passage of a flight of angels; it was the dawning of one of those days whose early hours are pale yet luminous; one of those unsullied days whose dazzling purity heartens and refreshes.

In the breezy dawn the women went, engrossed in their own sad thoughts and spellbound by a sense of inspiration for which they would have been unable to account. Were they indeed returning to weep upon the stone? To look once more upon Him who had held their hearts in His tender grasp? To sprinkle stronger perfumes than any Nicodemus had brought, around the tortured body? And as they went they questioned among themselves, saying:—

'Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?'

They were four, for Salome and Joanna the wife of Chuza had joined Mary of Magdala and Mary of Bethany; but they were only women, and women weakened by grief as well.

But when they reached the tomb amazement stayed their steps, for the cave's dark entrance gaped open upon the surrounding gloom. Unable to believe their eyes, the boldest touched the lintel with a trembling hand, and soon the rapidly growing light revealed the great stone lying near at hand.

Dumb with amazement, the women looked about them as were they expecting some one to come and explain what had happened in their absence, and it immediately occurred to Mary of Magdala that the Jews, not satisfied with the

suffering they had caused Him in life, had stolen the body of Christ. Or, vexed that He, a heretic, should have received such decent burial, had they perhaps cast His body into the shameful grave common to all who die by stoning or crucifixion ?

This was but a thought inspired by fear, however. Perhaps Jesus was still resting upon His perfumed couch within the tomb. They lacked the courage to enter, but neither could they depart without knowing the truth; and presently, when the sun appeared above the hill-tops and shed its light upon the mouth of the cave, they summoned all their courage and crossed its threshold.

At first they could distinguish nothing, but almost immediately fresh terror assailed them, for on the right side sat a white-robed young man who seemed to be expecting them, and whose garments shone like whitest snow amidst the surrounding darkness. And he said to them :—

'Be not affrighted. . . . He whom ye seek is not here, but is risen. . . . Why seek ye the living among the dead ? . . . remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'

Dazed, troubled and unable to speak, the women listened. And the youth continued :—

'. . . Go and tell his brethren that Jesus is risen from the dead, and that soon they shall see him.'

All four, trembling with awe and happiness, came forth and hastened away to obey the order they had received. But on nearing the entrance to the garden Mary of Magdala stopped, and the others went on towards the city without waiting for her. She herself could not have said why she had halted. Perhaps the words the stranger had spoken had failed to convince her, or she may not have been satisfied that the tomb was really empty. Perhaps, she reflected, the youth was but an accomplice of the priests, and had lied to them.

Turning round by a sudden impulse she saw a Man standing near her against a background of verdure and

sunshine. But Mary failed to recognize Him even when He spoke to her, saying :—

'Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?'

And she, believing Him to be Joseph's gardener who was come early to his work, answered :—

'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. . . . If thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.'

Jesus, moved by her pure and fervent desire, by her ingenuous simplicity, answered but a single word, pronounced but a single name, her name; but He spoke now in the beloved voice that had so often called to her, the voice she could never forget, and that now was full of longing and regret :—

'Mary!'

Then, as one suddenly awakened out of sleep, the despairing woman recognized Him for whom she sought.

'*Rabboni!* Master,' she cried, and falling on her knees in the wet grass, laid loving hands upon those bare feet that still showed the red prints of the nails.

But Jesus said :—

'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God. . . . and tell them that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.'

And immediately He withdrew from the kneeling woman's touch and disappeared, sun-crowned, among the clustering trees.

So long as He was visible Mary followed Him with her eyes; then she rose, confused, blind with happiness, her features convulsed with emotion, and hastened to join her companions.

The others had already reached the house where the Disciples were in hiding, and had poured out their incredible tale in short, disjointed sentences. They had told of the open tomb and of the white-robed youth; they had repeated his words concerning the Master who was risen from the dead, and had delivered His message.

But the men, who were still numb from the shock of the catastrophe, and who, during those days of peril, had displayed less zeal and devotion than these poor women, would not give credit to their amazing story. Hallucinations, women's imaginings, they said. How could He have risen so soon ? He had told them, indeed, that He would return, but not at once ; many terrible things must come to pass before that day.

They believed in the Master's ultimate resurrection, but it would not be until the day whereon all the dead should rise also, until His coming in glory, until the beginning of the Kingdom. But certainly that was not yet ; it was too soon ; these were but the troubled dreams of early morning, delusions of overwrought brains.

It was at that moment that Mary of Magdala came upon the scene, breathless from running and excitement. What the others had said was the truth. But there was more to tell. She herself had seen Him, and He had spoken to her, and at first she had not recognized Him—she had not done so, indeed, until He spoke her name. Her hands had touched His feet and she had seen His wounds. It was He, living as before, and He had ordered her, as had the stranger also, to hasten to His brethren that they might know He had risen as He had promised.

Roused at last, Simon and John hastened forth and started for Joseph's garden. John, who was the younger, outran his companion and reached the sepulchre before him. He looked within and saw the grave-clothes lying on the ground, but he did not enter. Presently Simon arrived, panting, and rushed into the cave. The bandages lay strewn upon the ground, but the napkin that had been about the Master's head was folded and lay by itself. John, who had followed Simon, also saw and believed ; and without a word they returned and hastened back to the others, running all the way, as did they expect to find Him standing amongst His Disciples.

But on leaving Mary Jesus had departed from Jerusalem.

After the solemn interval of the Passover all must go back to work and to the monotony of uneventful days.

On that morning two of Jesus' friends who had been with the Disciples were going to Emmaus on business of their own. Emmaus was a small town not far from Jerusalem, and only took two hours to reach on foot. They set out soon after Simon and John had returned from the sepulchre. The astonishing reports they had listened to had impressed them, but had failed to convince them of the truth of an event so prodigious and unexpected. Plain, practical men, not easily deceived, they could not believe all they had learned on that morning. If the Master's body had really disappeared, might it not have been removed by the hands of men? Cleopas and his companion were two good Jews, of the sort who reserved a place for the ideal in their spirits already overburdened with real anxieties. But the space reserved was not large and the ideal must be adequate to its surroundings, else it would most certainly be expelled as an undesirable guest. They also, with the majority of the Disciples, looked forward to the coming of a liberator, but of one who, to begin with, would set Israel free. They hoped for a Messiah who would be the Son of David rather than the Son of God, a warrior on horseback rather than a poor wanderer on foot; one who would punish his enemies rather than comfort the sick and caress little children. Christ's teachings had somewhat softened the hard shell of their belief in a Messiah in the flesh, but the Crucifixion had shaken them. They loved Jesus and were afflicted by His sufferings, but that sudden, shameful, inglorious end, against which He had not rebelled, was contrary to anything they had expected and to what they desired most ardently. That He should be a humble Saviour who bestrode an ass instead of a war-horse, and who was more spiritual and gentle than they could have wished, this they could understand, albeit with difficulty; and they had tolerated these conditions, although sometimes with reluctance. But that the Saviour should have been

unable to save either Himself or others, that the Saviour should have made no effort to save Himself, that the Messiah of the Jews should have died the death of a malefactor and murderer, condemned thereunto by the Jews themselves, was a disappointment that was all too overwhelming and a scandal that could never be lived down. They honestly pitied Him who had suffered on the Cross, but at the same time they were tempted to doubt that He had been mistaken with regard to His own identity. That death—and what a death !—loomed before their narrow, practical minds as the mournful sign of utter failure.

They were discussing these matters as they walked in the genial warmth of the noonday sun, arguing hotly, for they were not always of the same opinion. Suddenly, glancing behind them, they saw a shadow on the ground not far from them, and, facing about, perceived it was that of a Man who was following them as if seeking to hear what they were saying. As was the custom, they stopped to exchange greetings with the Stranger, who immediately came forward and joined them. His face was not unfamiliar to them, but although they stared long and hard at Him they failed to recognize the Man. Instead of satisfying their mute curiosity concerning Himself, their new Companion began to question them, saying :—

'What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk ? '

Cleopas, who was probably the elder of the two friends, said, with a gesture that denoted his astonishment :—

'Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days ? '

'What things ? ' the Traveller asked.

And Cleopas replied :—

'Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people ; and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel ; and besides all this, to-day is the third day since

these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre ; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said ; but him they saw not.'

But the Stranger exclaimed : 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ? ' And He continued, saying : ' . . . Have ye forgotten what Moses prophesied even unto our day ? Have ye not read Ezekiel and Daniel ? Know ye not the songs we sing unto the Lord, and his promises ? '

And in accents almost of indignation He recited the ancient verses, repeated the prophecies, and reminded them of the 'Man of Sorrows' Isaiah had described. The two friends listened patiently and attentively, and did not interrupt, for this Man spoke with fire, and the well-known threats and admonitions seemed to take on a new meaning in His mouth, a meaning that was now so clear it seemed impossible they should not have perceived it for themselves. The Man's words were to them as the echo of others they had heard in the times past, but which had reached them, confused and vague, as though spoken beyond an intervening wall before the dawn of day.

Meanwhile they had reached the outskirts of Emmaus, and the Pilgrim paused as were He about to leave them and continue His journey alone. But the two could not bear to part from their mysterious Companion and begged Him to remain with them. The sun was sinking slowly, gilding the landscape more richly than ever, and the three shadows lay stretched longer than before in the dust of the roadway. So they urged Him, saying :—

'Abide with us : for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' 'Thou also must be weary, and it is time to eat.'

And, taking Him by the hand, they led Him into the house where they intended to refresh themselves.

When they were seated at table their Guest, who sat between them, took the bread, broke it, and offered a piece to each. At that act the eyes of Cleopas were suddenly opened, as when the sun shines in upon the bed and awakens one unexpectedly. Shaking as with an ague, pale and speechless, the two friends sprang to their feet. They had at last recognized Him, who had been put to death, whom they had misunderstood and wronged in their doubting hearts. But before they had time even to embrace Him, He had vanished from their sight.

They had failed to recognize Him either by His outward aspect or by His words, although they so closely resembled words He had spoken before; nor had they recognized Him by the light that shone from His countenance as He talked, nor by the sound of His voice. But it had sufficed for Him to take the bread in His hands, as a father may do when about to divide the loaf among his sons after a hard day's work or a long journey, for Him to perform that loving office they had so often witnessed, and they recognized His hands, His hands so often raised in blessing, His hands that had been pierced; and the scales fell from their eyes and they knew that they were face to face with One who was risen from the dead. In His life of the flesh, when He had been their friend, they had failed to understand Him; when He had taught them as they walked together along the dusty highway, they had not recognized Him; it was only when He performed this loving office of service to them who were His servants, and offered them the bread that is life and the hope of life, that they saw Him for the first time.

And so, fasting and weary as they were, they immediately set out to return to Jerusalem, where they arrived when darkness had already fallen.

As they walked they marvelled at themselves, and were ashamed, saying :—

' " Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures ? " Why did we not recognize him then ? '

The Disciples were still astir, and without stopping to

get their breath Cleopas and his companion poured out the story of their meeting, relating all Christ had said to them as they walked together, and telling how they had failed to recognize Him until He had broken the bread. And in answer to this fresh testimony, several voices cried out together :—

'The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.'

These four apparitions, however, these four manifestations, had not sufficed to free the minds of all from doubt. Several held that this sudden resurrection, which had taken place so secretly and mysteriously at night, was rather a hallucination produced by grief and longing than firmly established truth. Who were they who said they had seen Him ? One was a half-frenzied woman who had once been possessed by evil spirits ; another was a man in a fever, who had not been himself since his denial of his Master ; the other two were ignorant men who were not even of the Twelve, and whom Jesus was now supposed, for some reason unexplained, to have preferred to His closer friends. Mary might have been deceived by her imagination. Simon might have been seeking relief for the severe humiliation under which he was labouring ; the other two might well be impostors or perhaps merely visionaries. If Christ were indeed risen, would He not have shown Himself to all, they being assembled together ? Why these marks of preference ; why this apparition at three-score furlongs from Jerusalem ?

They believed in the Resurrection indeed, but regarded it as one of the signs of the world's approaching dissolution, when all things should have been accomplished. But now that they were confronted by the fact of Christ's Resurrection alone, on a day when all things were as usual, they became conscious that the return of life to flesh, and to flesh that had not fallen peacefully into the last sleep, but had had life torn from it by violence ; that the idea of a resurrection reverting from the remote future to the immediate present, was at variance with the conceptions that went to make the tissue of their minds, conceptions that had always existed but had never appeared contra-

dictory until the moment of this convergence of two superposed orders: the remote miracle and the present fact.

If Jesus be risen then He was indeed God; but would a true God, the Son of the Almighty, ever have submitted to suffer so shameful a death? If His power were indeed such that He could conquer death, why had He not destroyed His judges, confounded Pilate, turned the arms of them who tortured Him to stone? What absurd mystery was this which had induced the Almighty to allow the weak to put Him to shame?

Thus did some of the Disciples reason within themselves; the men who had heard without understanding. Cautious in their sophistication, they did not venture to deny the Resurrection outright, but they would not commit themselves, and continued to speculate concerning the possible and the impossible, hoping the while for a final manifestation in which, however, they could not bring themselves to believe.

LXXXIX 'HAVE YE HERE ANY MEAT?'

They had hardly finished their hastily improvised and melancholy supper when Jesus, standing upright and shining with light, appeared beside the table. Looking from one to another, He said in His own sweet voice:—

'Peace be unto you.'

There was no answer. Amazement had overpowered joy even in those who were not beholding Him for the first time. On their faces the risen Christ read the doubt that was in the hearts of many, and the question they lacked the courage to put into words:—

'Is it truly thy living self or a shadow come forth from the tombs to mock us?'

And He who had been betrayed said unto them:—

'Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.'

And He held out His hands to them, showed them the print of the nails on the backs and palms, prints that were

still bloody ; and He opened His cloak also that they might see the wound in His side. Some of the Disciples rose from the couches and, kneeling before the Master, saw the two deep, red-rimmed, purple holes in His naked feet.

But no one dared to touch Him, dreading lest He might fade away as suddenly as He had appeared. And would he who embraced Him feel the warm contact of a body or would his arms pass through the unsubstantiality of an empty shadow ?

It was He, it was His voice, His face, and there were the unmistakable signs of the Crucifixion ; but there was also something that was different in His appearance, that they could not have defined even had they been able to reflect calmly at that moment. The most reluctant were obliged to admit that it was the Master Himself who stood before them, with all the appearance of life renewed, but their minds were still haunted by doubt and they remained speechless, as did they shrink from the necessity of crediting their own senses, as did they expect to awaken presently and find themselves once more in the comfortable world of realities that this atrocious cataclysm had convulsed. Even Simon was silent. What, indeed, could he say without betraying himself by his tears to Him who had regarded him with that same expression in the courtyard of Caiaphas' palace, when he, Simon, had been in the very act of disclaiming all knowledge of the Master ?

To banish their last doubts, Jesus asked :—

' Have ye here any meat ? '

He Himself no longer needed any other food than that He had never ceased to ask for, albeit almost always in vain, throughout His life ; but for these men of flesh and blood a carnal proof was necessary ; they who believed only in matter and drew their sustenance from matter must have this material manifestation. On that last night they had all sat at meat together, and now that they were once more united, He would eat with them :—

' Have ye here any meat ? '

There was still part of a broiled fish in the dish. Simon pushed it forward, and the Master, coming to the table,

ate of it, with a piece of bread, while all watched Him closely as were it the first time they had seen Him eat.

When He had eaten He raised His eyes, and said :—

'Do ye now believe? Do not ye yet understand? Do ye then deem it possible that a spirit should eat in your presence as I have done? How often have I upbraided you for the hardness of your hearts and your lack of faith! And lo, ye are as before, and have not believed them who have seen me! Yet I have hidden nothing from you concerning what was to come. But ye are deaf and without memory; ye hear and forget, read and do not understand. These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written . . . concerning me. Thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you. Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Go ye therefore and teach all nations. . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. He that believeth . . . shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. Yet a little while I am on earth and we shall meet in Galilee, but afterwards I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'

As He talked the faces of His Disciples brightened with a forgotten hope and their eyes shone as had they been drinking wine. This was the first hour of comfort they had had during all these long days. His undoubted presence proved that the incredible was come to pass, that God had not forsaken them, that He would never forsake them. His enemies who had appeared victorious were conquered. The prophecies were fulfilled and completed by visible truth. All the things He had said to them they knew before, but only now, when His lips had repeated them, did they really live in their hearts.

If the King were returned the coming of the Kingdom must be at hand, and His brethren, instead of being scoffed at and persecuted, would rule with Him in all eternity. The words of Christ had reanimated the most lukewarm, had revived the memory of other lessons, of other happier days, and they suddenly experienced a sense of relief and of zeal such as they had not known for many days, and a stronger longing to cleave together, to love one another, to be together for all time. If the Master was risen, then they themselves could not die; if He had been able to come forth from the dark tomb, His promises were truly those of a God, and would be fulfilled in every particular. Verily they had not believed in vain, and they were no longer alone. The Crucifixion had been the darkening of a single day that the sun might shine more brightly on all days yet to come.

XC THOMAS THE TWIN

Thomas called the Twin had not been present at that supper, but on the morrow his friends went in search of him, still in the state of excitement into which the words of Jesus had thrown them.

'We have seen the Lord,' they cried. 'It was He Himself, and He spoke to us and ate with us, like any living being.'

Thomas was one of those who had felt the shame of Golgotha most keenly. On one occasion he had declared his readiness to die with his Master, but he had fled with the others when the torches of the soldiers appeared on the Mount of Olives. His faith had been obscured by the darkness that hung over the Place of the Skull. In spite of all forewarnings, he had never believed his Master would end thus. The thought of that shameful hill whither Jesus had allowed Himself to be conducted, offering no more resistance than might a weary sheep, was almost more painful to him than the thought of the loss of Him he had loved. This crumbling of all his hopes had offended him as had it been the revelation of a fraud, and was an excuse, in his eyes, even for cowardly desertion. Thomas, like

Cleopas and his kind, was a sensualist, who at the mighty summons of Christ had been caught up into a world that was too lofty, that was not his own. Faith had come upon him unawares, like a contagious madness; but, when the flame whereat his ardour was rekindled day by day had been extinguished or seemed to have suffered extinction beneath a mighty wave of hate, his spirit ceased to glow, became congealed indeed, and his true nature reasserted itself, that sought with the senses for what is sensible, that expected to witness material transformations in matter, that looked to matter alone for certitude and material consolation. His eyes refused to contemplate the things his hands could not touch, and were consequently destined never to perceive the invisible, which perception is a grace reserved for those alone who believe in the invisible. He believed in the Kingdom, especially when his spirit was uplifted by the word and presence of Jesus; but the kingdom to which he looked forward was not only of pure spirits floating in space upon fragile islands of cloud, but one where living men in whose veins the warm blood flowed would eat and drink at solid and substantial tables, and govern a finer world than this of ours, a world bestowed upon them by the Almighty, by virtue of a new set of laws.

After the scandal of the Cross, Thomas was anything but disposed to believe in the Resurrection from hearsay. He had been too roughly disillusioned a first time for him again to credit the testimony of his companions in deception. And his answer to these who, rejoicing, brought him the news, was :—

'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.'

He had said at first 'Except I shall see,' but he quickly corrected himself, for even the eyes can deceive; many indeed have been dazzled by visions; and his mind suggested the experiment of the flesh, the brutal, atrocious test of putting his finger where the nails had been, and his whole hand where the lance had entered; imitating the blind who are frequently less easily deceived than those who see.

He denies faith, which is the keener sight of the spirit; he even denies sight, that most divine sense the body possesses. He places his trust in his hands alone, in flesh that may touch flesh. This twofold denial leaves him in the dark, leaves him staggering blindly, until Light made Man, by a supreme act of loving condescension, shall restore the light of both his eyes and heart.

Thomas' answer made him one of the most famous of men, for it is an eternal characteristic of Christ to eternalize even those who have most deeply offended against Him.

Eight days later the Disciples were once more assembled in the same house, and this time Thomas was of their number. Throughout the week he had been hoping that he also might be permitted to look upon the Master, and at times he had trembled lest it be his answer that was keeping Him away. But suddenly, as they sat together to-day, a voice sounded from the threshold, saying :—

'Peace be unto you.'

Jesus was in their midst and His eyes were seeking Thomas. He is come for him—for him alone—because the love He bears him cannot be shaken by any injury. And He calls him by name and goes close to him that he may see Him face to face, saying :—

'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.'

Trembling, Thomas obeys, and then cries joyously :—

'My Lord and my God!'

These words, that seem but a simple and usual form of salutation, are in reality Thomas' acknowledgment of a defeat more glorious than any victory, and from that moment he belonged wholly to Christ. Hitherto he had respected the Master as a man more perfect than all others; now he recognized Him as God, as his God.

And in order that the memory of his doubt might never lose its sting, Jesus replied :—

'Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'

Herein the Lord pronounced the last of the Beatitudes

and the greatest—Blessed are they that believe without seeing! The only truths that really possess a value that is absolute are those that are hidden from bodily sight, that hands of flesh cannot grasp. Such truths are from above, and he the five doors of whose spirit are closed does not receive them, and will perceive them only on that day when his body with its five suspicious doorkeepers shall have become but a creased and worn-out garment that is flung aside, presently to be buried in the ground.

Thomas, although he is a saint, could have no part in that Beatitude. An ancient legend relates that his hand remained red with blood until the day of his death; a legend this that possesses all the truth of its terrible symbolism, if we take it to mean that incredulity is a form of murder; and the world is full of murderers who began by murdering their own souls.

XCI THE SAVIOUR REPULSED

The companions of Jesus in His first life were finally convinced that He had now entered upon His second and eternal life. He who had suffered death, and had slept for two days as a human body, surrounded by Nicodemus' perfumes and swathed in Joseph's sheet, had awakened as a God. But how stubbornly had they doubted before this final recognition of the irrefutable fact of His return to life!

Yet it is precisely these astonished and perplexed Disciples whom the enemies of Christ—in order to rid themselves of the greatest stumbling-block in the way of denial—accuse of having invented, either intentionally or unconsciously, this myth of the Resurrection. According to Caiaphas and his followers, the Disciples had removed the body by night and had then spread the news of the empty tomb, that certain simple-minded mystics might the more easily believe that Jesus was indeed risen, and thus enable the cunning impostors to continue their abominable deception in the name of the dead wayfarer. Matthew relates that the Jews had actually paid a high price for the services of certain false witnesses, who in

case of need were ready to swear that they had seen Simon and his accomplices in the very act of violating the tomb and carrying away something large and white upon their shoulders.

But the modern enemies of Christ, with a last remnant of respect for the men who shed their blood for the foundation of an imperishable Church, or rather, perhaps, because they are firmly convinced of the ingenuousness of the early martyrs, have relinquished this theory of a theft by night. Neither Simon nor the others were comedians or conjurers; these poor deluded souls, they say, were not clever enough to plan so cunning a trick. They appear not as impostors but as men who have been imposed upon. But if they were not impostors they were certainly the stupid victims of their own imaginings or of the knavish tricks of others.

The Disciples, so these grave deniers of the transcendental declare, hoped so intensely for the Resurrection Christ had promised and which was so necessary to redeem the shame of the Cross, that they were induced, almost forced, indeed, to believe in it themselves and proclaim it as imminent. In that atmosphere, charged with superstitious expectancy, the vision of a hysterical woman, the dream of one labouring under a hallucination or the mistaken perceptions of deluded senses, had sufficed to spread the rumour of apparitions among the little band of surviving friends. Many, unwilling to believe that the Master had deceived them, were glad to credit the word of those who declared they had seen Him after death, and by dint of repeating the fancies born of their own fervid imaginations, these visionaries actually came to believe in their reality and communicated this belief to others. Only on condition of a posthumous confirmation of the Victim's divinity would it be possible to prevent the dispersal of His followers and create the first, solid nucleus of the universal Church.

But those who sweep aside the certainty of the first generation of Christians by accusing them of fraud or imbecility overlook too many essential points.

First and foremost there is the testimony of Paul. Saul the Pharisee had been educated at the school of Gamaliel

and had witnessed the end of Christ—albeit from afar and as an enemy—and was certainly acquainted with his early master's theory concerning the Resurrection. But Paul, who received the first of all the gospels from the lips of James, called the Lord's brother, and from Simon; Paul, who was famous in all the churches both of Jews and Gentiles, wrote as follows in his first Epistle to the Corinthians: 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. . . . He was buried, and . . . he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and . . . he was seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve: after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.' The authenticity of the Epistle to the Corinthians is recognized even by the most scrupulous and careful searchers after falsifications, and cannot have been written later than the spring of the year 58, that is to say, less than thirty years after the Crucifixion. It is, therefore, of an earlier date than the oldest of the Gospels. Many who had known Christ were still alive at that time, and might easily have refuted the Apostle's statement. Corinth was at the gate of Asia, and many Asiatics dwelt there who were in constant communication with Judea, and the Pauline epistles being public messages, they were read openly in the assemblies and copies of them were sent to the other churches. Paul's solemn and precise testimony may have reached, most certainly did reach, Jerusalem, where the enemies of Jesus, of whom many were still alive, might easily have set up other testimony against it. Had Paul imagined the possibility of a well-grounded confutation, he would never have ventured to write those words. The very fact that, at so short a distance of time, a prodigy so contrary to the common beliefs and interests of watchful enemies could be publicly affirmed, proves that the Resurrection was not something a handful of fanatics had imagined in their delirium, but an actual event which it was difficult to disprove but easy to confirm. We have no other record than that contained in Paul's epistle of Jesus' apparition in the presence of five hundred, but not

for a moment can we suspect that Paul, who was one of the grandest and purest spirits of the early Church, can have invented his text, he who had so long persecuted those who believed in the Resurrection. It is more than probable that Jesus appeared to the five hundred in Galilee on the mountain of which Matthew tells, and that the Apostle may have known some one who was present at that memorable assembly.

Nor is this all. The Evangelists who have chronicled the doings of Jesus' first companions—somewhat confusedly at times, but always with perfect candour—confess, perhaps unintentionally, that not only did the Disciples not expect the Resurrection, but that they were actually slow to credit it. A careful study of the four historians will show that they continued to doubt for some time, even in the presence of the risen Christ. When on that Sunday morning the women hastened to tell them that the tomb was empty and that the Lord lived, they accused them of raving. When, later on, He appeared to many in Galilee, 'they worshipped him,' Matthew says, 'but some doubted.' And when He appeared in the room where the Disciples sat at supper, there were those who would not trust their own eyes, but hesitated until they had seen Him eat. Thomas still continued to doubt until Christ had allowed him to touch His flesh.

So little did they foresee His Resurrection that the first effect of His apparition was to terrify them. 'They thought he was a spirit.' They were therefore less credulous and easily deceived than those who seek to discredit that which they would have us believe; and so far removed were they from the idea that He would return in the flesh, among the living, that on their first perceiving Him they invariably mistook Him for another. Mary of Magdala believed Him to be Joseph of Arimathea's gardener; Cleopas and his companion failed to recognize Him as He walked beside them; Simon and the others 'knew not that it was Jesus' when He stood upon the lake-shore. Had they really been expecting Him with hearts aflame, with longing, would they have been so terrified? Would

they not have recognized Him instantly? The Gospels actually convey the impression that the friends of Christ, far from inventing the story of His return, were practically coerced into crediting the fact by outward and overpowering circumstances, and that they did so only after much hesitation. The opposite, indeed, of what those seek to prove who accuse the Apostles of having been themselves deceived or of having deceived others.

But why did they hesitate? Because the teachings of Jesus had not sufficed to banish from their slow and stubborn minds the long-standing Jewish repugnance to the idea of immortality. For centuries the worldly-minded Jews had been strangers to a belief in the resurrection of the dead. Only in some of the prophets, such as Daniel and Hosea, are some slight traces of such a belief to be found; only in a single passage in Maccabees is it explicitly set forth. In the days of Christ the people had a vague notion of immortality as of a miracle of the dim future, that had to do with the Apocrypha, but that could not possibly transpire until the final upheaval at the sound of the last trump. The Sadducees denied it absolutely while the Pharisees admitted it, not, however, as the privilege of the individual, but as the distant and common reward of all the just. When the superstitious Antipas said of Jesus that He was John risen from the dead, he was merely using a strong figure to say that the new Prophet was a second John.

The reluctance to recognize as possible so extraordinary a violation of the laws of death was so deeply rooted in the Jewish people that the very Disciples of Him who was risen, of Him who had foretold His own Resurrection, were not disposed to credit its authenticity without putting it to the severest of tests. Yet they had seen the son of the widow of Nain, Jairus' daughter and the brother of Mary and Martha raised from the dead by the mighty word of Christ —the three sleepers whom Jesus had awakened out of pity for a mother's grief and the sorrow of a father and of two loving sisters. But it was the habit and the fate of the Twelve to misunderstand and forget. They were still too

thoroughly engrossed in matters of the flesh to believe unhesitatingly in so immediate a victory over death. But, once persuaded, their certainty was such that from the seed of those first unwilling witnesses there sprung so rich a harvest of beings resurrected in the faith of Him who is the Resurrection, that it has endured throughout the centuries and has not been garnered even unto our day.

The slanderings of the Jews, the accusations of false witnesses, the doubts of the Disciples themselves, the snares set by enemies at once implacable and apprehensive, the inventions of the Heresiarchs, the wry faces pulled by the *beaux esprits* who had a direct interest in the definite suppression of Him they deemed infamous, the quibblings and evasions of ideologists, the attacks and counterminings of higher (and lower) criticisms, have all failed to affect the certainty existing in the hearts of millions that the body that was taken down from the Cross on Golgotha did in very truth reappear on the third day, never more to suffer death. In the hope of ridding themselves of Him, Christ's chosen people consigned Him to death, but death refused him as the Jews themselves had done, and humanity has not settled its account with Him who was crucified and who came forth from the sepulchre to show His side wherein the lance of a Roman soldier had laid bare for all eternity the Heart that returns love for hatred.

The cowardly who refuse to believe in His first life, His second life and His life eternal deliberately cut themselves off from true life ; from the life that is willing acknowledgment, loving surrender, hope in the invisible, the certainty of things unseen. They are the pitiful dead who appear to live, who, like death, refuse to receive Him ; those who still drag the weight of their bodies, that are still warm and palpitating, along the ways of this patient earth of ours, laughing at the Resurrection. They who are dead and who refuse Life will be excluded from the second birth in the spirit, but, on the last day, they will not be spared an irrefragable, an appalling Resurrection.

Supreme suffering and supreme joy have brought the drama to a close, and each one of the actors may now return whence he came ; the Son to His Father, the King to His Kingdom, the high priest to his basins of blood, the chorus to hopeful silence, the fishermen to their nets.

Some one had finally ended by mending those torn, frayed and water-bleached nets, so often mended, darned, patched and rewoven, that the first fishers of men had left lying on the shore at Capernaum when they went hence without turning to look back. Some one had stored them away with all the care those who never leave their homes have for trifles, because dreams are but fleeting and hunger lasts as long as life itself. The wife of Simon, the father of John and James, and the twin brother of Thomas had carefully preserved the sweep-nets and the draw-nets, as things that would some day be of use again, and also in memory of the exiles, as had some voice whispered to them saying : ' They will return. The Kingdom is indeed beautiful, but it is still in the dim future, whereas the lake is lovely now and always, and there is fish in plenty. Holiness is a blessed thing, but one cannot live by the spirit alone ; and a fish on the table to-day is more welcome to him who is hungry than the promise of a throne in times to come.'

This wisdom of those who journey not, who are as closely attached to their homes as is the moss to the rock, was destined to be confirmed, at least for a space. The fishermen did return. The fishers of men appeared once more in Galilee and got out their worn nets. He who had enticed them hence that they might witness both His shame and His glory, had ordered them to return. They had not forgotten Him, nor could they ever do so ; and among themselves, as with all who would listen to them, they talked of Him only. He who was risen had said, ' We shall meet in Galilee,' and they had departed from hostile Judea, from that wrathful harlot dominated by her murderous lovers, and had set out for the peaceful country where the loving

Thief of souls had first laid hold upon them. It was good to see all this again, the old houses peeled by the dampness, and the clothes drying in the wind, flapping like white banners, and the tender grass at the foot of the walls, and the tables scoured clean by the old people's humble hands, and the oven from whose sooty mouth sparks flew merrily on every eighth day. And the quiet village, that was like a town on the seashore, was lovely also, with its groups of naked, brown-skinned children, with the sun pouring down upon its market-place where sacks and hampers were propped in the shade of the sheds ; and even the smell of fish that every morning was wafted to it on the breeze was welcome and familiar. But more beautiful than anything else was the lake itself. On perfect mornings it was a sheet of liquid turquoise whereon there appeared long streaks of beryl ; but of a cloudy afternoon it was a sheet of dull slate ; in the light of warm sunsets it became a basin of milky opalescence with lines and patches of hyacinth ; a churning, white-rimmed shadow it was on starry nights, a silvery, haunting shadow under a moonlit sky. It had been on that lake, that was as the tutelary genius of this remote and happy region, that their eyes had first been opened to the beauty of light and water, a beauty more noble than that of the hard and heavy land, and less forbidding than that of fire. The boat with its rigging, its worn benches, its proud rudder painted red had been dearer to them in their youth than that other home, that whitewashed cubic house that stood immovable on the shore, awaiting their return. The endless hours of waiting and hope, spent in watching the sparkle of the waters set in motion by the nets or in scanning a threatening sky, had been the most numerous of their simple, frugal lives.

Then had come the day whereon a poorer but more powerful Master had called them to His side, to labour in a supernatural and perilous undertaking. The poor souls, torn from their familiar surroundings, had done their best to keep their light burning brightly beside that flame, but the new life had crushed them, as grapes are crushed in the vat, as olives are crushed in the press ; had wrung tears of

love and piety from their rough hearts. But it was only the raising of the cross on Calvary that made them shed true tears ; and that they might once more be strengthened by hope, He who had suffered crucifixion must return and again break bread with them.

And they were come back, carefully cherishing the memories that were so few, and that yet must suffice to transform a world. But, before setting forth on their appointed mission, they would wait to see, once more, the Master they loved, in the region that had been dear to Him also. All were come back changed ; they were more restless and melancholy, and seemed as strangers out of the land of the lotus-eaters, and as did their purer vision already behold a new country indissolubly connected with heaven. But there were the nets, hanging against the walls, and the boats rising and falling on the swelling bosom of the waters ; and, both from inclination and need, the fishers of men set about fishing in the familiar lake.

On a certain evening seven of Christ's Disciples were assembled on the shore at Capernaum—Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana, James, John and two others. Simon said : ' I go a fishing.' And his companions replied : ' We also go with thee.' They set forth in their boat, but that night they caught nothing. At daybreak, tired and disappointed, they made for the shore, and when they were come near, the pale light of dawn revealed the figure of a Man standing upon the shore as were He waiting for them : ' But the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.'

' Children, have ye any meat ? ' the Stranger asked.

And they answered that they had none.

' Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find,' He called again.

They obeyed, and presently the net was so full that it was with difficulty they hauled it in. And now they were all trembling, for they had realized that the Stranger was Jesus. Then did that ' disciple whom Jesus loved ' say to Peter :—

' It is the Lord ! '

And without a word Peter threw on his fisher's coat (for he was naked) and sprang into the lake that he might be the first to reach the shore. The boat was only about two hundred cubits from the land, and soon all seven were gathered about the Lord ; and no one said to Him : ' Who art thou ? ' for all had recognized Him.

A fire had been kindled on the beach and some fish were frying upon it, and there was also a napkin containing bread. And Jesus said :—

' Come and dine.'

Then for the last time He broke bread and distributed it, as He also divided the fishes. When they had eaten Jesus turned to Simon Peter, and beneath that gaze the unhappy man quailed. The Lord said to him :—

' Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these ? '

At these words, spoken so gently but which brought acute suffering to him who had thrice denied his Master, his thoughts flew to another spot, beside another fire where others had pressed him with questions ; and he recalled his answers, and the glance of One on His way to death, and he remembered the tears he had shed in the night. Nor did he dare to answer now as he longed to do, for, coming from his lips, the word ' Yes ' would have seemed impudence and arrogance, and to say ' No ' would have been to lie shamefully. At last, however, he stammered :—

' Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee.'

It is as had Peter said : ' This is not a confession, O Lord, for Thou who knowest all things and lookest into all hearts, art aware that I love Thee ; but I lack the courage to add, before my companions who know me well, that I love Thee more than these.'

And Christ said to him : ' Feed my lambs.'

And again He asked him, saying :—

' Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ? '

But Simon, who in his trouble could find no other answer, did but repeat :—

' Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee.'

' Why inflict this pain upon me ? ' his tone pleads. ' Dost Thou not know without asking that I love Thee, love

Thee better than ever, as I have never loved Thee, and that I shall give my life for Thy name's sake ? '

Then said Jesus : ' Feed my sheep.'

And for the third time He repeated the words :—

' Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ? '

The Lord wished that before them all and for the third time, the three denials uttered at Jerusalem should be cancelled by three fresh promises. But Peter can no longer bear the strain, and almost in tears, he cries :—

' Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee ! '

The test is finished at last, and once more Jesus repeats :—

' Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest ; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.'

' Even unto death, even unto a cross such as the one to which I was nailed,' Jesus would seem to say. ' Know thou what it means to love Me. My love is the twin of death. Because of My love for thee they slew Me ; because of thy love for Me they will put you to death. Consider, Simon son of Jonas, the meaning of this covenant thou art making with Me, and consider also what thy fate will be. Henceforth I shall no longer be near to pardon, and restore thy peace of mind after an act of cowardice. Henceforth all backsliding and desertion will be counted a thousand times more heinous than before. Thou shalt be called upon to account for every one of the lambs I leave in thy care, and at the end of thy labours, thy reward, as was Mine also, will be a cross and four nails, but also life everlasting. Choose, therefore ; it is the last chance thou wilt have to choose, and thy choice must endure for all time ; it is an irrevocable choice of which I will demand an account as does the master of his servant whom he leaves in charge. And now that thou knowest and hast chosen, follow Me.'

Peter is quick to obey, but, looking behind him, he sees that John is following also, and asks :—

' Lord, and what shall this man do ? '

And Jesus made answer: 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.'

For Simon Peter, leadership and martyrdom; for John, immortality and waiting. He who bears the name of him who heralded the first advent shall himself herald the second. The historian of the world's end shall be persecuted, imprisoned and shall dwell apart, but he will outlive all others, and his eyes shall see the stones fall apart on the accursed hill at Jerusalem. In his sounding, cerulean desert place, between the dazzling brilliance from on high and the blackness that will rest upon the waters, he will witness, suffer and rejoice in the mighty closing scene of the second advent. Peter has followed Christ, has been crucified for Christ's sake, and has left behind him the endless dynasty of the Vicars of Christ; but to John it has not been given to rest in death. He is waiting with us, the contemporary of all generations, as love, silent, as hope, eternal.

XCIII THE CLOUD

Again they took their way to Jerusalem, again leaving their nets, and for the last time. They were setting out on a journey whose stages would be marked by blood.

From the same place whence He had descended in human glory and amidst the waving of green branches, He must ascend in celestial glory, after this interval of shame and rebirth. For forty days after the Resurrection—as long a time as He had dwelt apart in the desert—He remained among men. Although His body appeared unchanged, His life, sealed and transhumanized, was one of extremest sublimation in the midst of this carnal and visible world. He was become all spirit that He might ascend once more to those heights whence He was come down but little more than thirty years before, to open a narrow window in this gloom-encompassed world of ours, through which mankind might look out upon the glory of celestial realms.

He no longer shared the lives of His Apostles, for He was now detached from the living, but He appeared more than

once in their midst to reconfirm His last promises, and perhaps also to communicate to the most worthy those mysteries that were never set forth in any book, but were handed down, under the seal of secrecy, throughout the apostolic era and beyond, and which, at a later date, came to be known—albeit imperfectly enough—as the Secret Discipline (*Arcana Disciplina*).

The last time they saw Him was on the Mount of Olives, at the very place where, before the Passion, He had foretold the destruction of the Temple and city, and had described the signs that would precede His second advent; and where, amidst the darkness of the night and of His own anguish, Satan had been finally routed, but had left his conqueror bathed in sweat and blood. It was one of the last evenings in May, and the clouds, all gold in this golden hour, suspended like celestial islands in the dazzling brilliance of the setting sun, might have been the smoke of costly and sweet-smelling sacrifice ascending heavenward from the sun-warmed earth. In the fields the birds were beginning to summon their young to the nest, and, decked with unripe fruit, the branches swayed gently in the evening breeze. Over the distant city, still proudly intact, there hovered a cloud of dust out of which emerged the Temple with its pinnacles and turrets and its white and gleaming courts.

Once more the Disciples repeated the question they had asked in the same place on the night of the twofold prophecy. Now that He was come again as He had promised, why should they wait longer?

'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?'

Perhaps they meant the Kingdom of God, which to them, as it had been to the prophets, was one with the kingdom of Israel, for the divine renewal of the earth was to begin in Judea. But the Lord made answer:—

'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.'

And when He had spoken He raised both hands to bless them ; but while they gazed upon Him, He rose from the earth and suddenly, as on the morning of the Transfiguration, a bright cloud encompassed Him and hid Him from them. The Apostles could not take their eyes from the sky and stood gazing upwards, motionless and amazed, until two men clad in white accosted them, saying :—

' Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? this same Jesus. which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.'

After this, when they had worshipped in silence for a space, they returned to Jerusalem, flooded with a sad joy and thinking of the new day that was about to dawn—the first day of an undertaking that, after nearly twenty centuries, is still unfinished. Now they also stood alone, alone against an enemy whose numbers are incalculable, whose name is the World. But heaven is not so far away as it was before the coming of Christ ; Jacob's mystic ladder is no longer the dream of a hermit, but is firmly planted upon the earth, in the very country where they are, and there is One on high who intercedes for them, who will not forget the fragile beings who are destined to live in all eternity and who were His brothers for a season. ' Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' This had been one of His last promises and the greatest of all. He was ascended into heaven, indeed, but heaven was no longer merely that empty, convex space wherein the storm-clouds roll and vanish, passing quickly and tumultuously, like the kingdoms of the earth ; and where the stars shine silently like the souls of saints. The Son of Man who ascended mountains that He might be nearer heaven, who shone with light of heaven itself, who died raised above the earth beneath a lowering sky, who returned but to soar heavenwards amidst all the beauty of a May evening, and who will come again one day upon the clouds of heaven, is still amongst us, is still present in the world it was His mission to redeem. He still listens to words that come from the depths of our souls, still counts

our bitter tears if indeed they be of our heart's blood ; He is our invisible, gracious guest who will never forsake us, because, by His wish, the earth is become the anticipation of the Kingdom of Heaven, and henceforth is part of heaven itself. Christ has claimed as His own this rough nurse of all mankind, this ball that is but a dot in the infinite ; He has made it His for all time, and He is more closely bound to us to-day than when He ate the bread made with the corn that our fields produce. No divine promise can be cancelled ; the drops of moisture of which that May cloud was composed which hid Him from sight are still with us, and every day our tired, mortal eyes look upon that same heaven out of which He shall come in the dazzling and terrible radiance of His glory.

XCIV A PRAYER TO CHRIST

Thou art still with us ; every day Thou art in our midst, and so shall it be for all time.

Thou livest amongst us, beside us, on this earth which is Thine and ours ; on this earth where, a little child, Thou didst dwell among little children, where, condemned, Thou didst suffer with thieves. Thou livest amongst the living, in the world of them that live, which did please Thee and which Thou still lovest. Thou livest, but not with the life of man, upon the earth that is man's dwelling-place ; invisible even to those who seek Thee, Thou livest, perhaps, in poverty, Thyself buying Thy loaf and passing unobserved by all.

But the times are ripe for Thy reappearance before us all, for a peremptory and unmistakable sign to this generation. Thou seest our need, O Lord Jesus ! Thou seest the vastness of our need ! Thou cannot but see how pressing is our necessity, how real and painful is our misery, our indigence, our despair ; Thou knowest our need of Thine intervention, of Thy return.

And even though it be but for a brief moment, though it come all unexpectedly and be followed immediately by Thy disappearance ; though it be but a single apparition,

a coming only to depart, a single word on arriving, a single word on disappearing, a single sign and warning, a radiance in the sky, a light shining in the darkness, a parting of the heavens, a glory illumining the night, a single hour of Thine eternity, a single word to break Thy mighty silence !

We need Thee, Thee only and no other ! Only Thou who lovest us canst feel for us who suffer that pity each one feels for himself. Only Thou knowest how immeasurable is the need of Thee in this world, in this hour of the world's life. None other, no one amongst the living, no one of those who sleep beneath the sod of glory can bestow upon us needy beings, who are plunged in the deepest of all misery, that of the spirit, the gift that saves. All need Thee, even those who are unaware of their need—these most of all. He who hungers goes in search of bread and knows not that his hunger is for Thee ; he who thirsts imagines that his longing is for water, but his thirst is for Thee ; he who is sick believes he is seeking health by many means, and his sickness is but due to his separation from Thee. He who seeks the world's beauty seeks Thee unawares, for Thou art all and perfect beauty ; he who, in his heart, pursues truth, all unwittingly desires Thee, who art the only truth worth possessing ; and he who wearies himself in the vain search for peace seeks but Thee, who art the only peace wherein the most sorely troubled heart may find repose. All these invoke Thee without knowing that they do so, and their cry is infinitely more despairing than our own.

We do not cry out unto Thee for the pride of beholding Thee face to face as did the Galileans and the people of Judea, nor for the glory of once looking into Thine eyes, nor with the insane purpose of bending Thy will to our supplications. We do not ask for Thy grand descent in celestial glory, for the splendours of the Transfiguration, for the trumpet-call of the angels and all the sublime ceremonial of the final advent. Thou knowest how humble we are despite this bold presumption. We desire Thee only, Thy person, Thy poor body that was pierced and bruised, that is clad in the coarse garments of the labourer ;

we would gaze into those Thine eyes that pierce the walls of bone and flesh which hide our hearts ; that heal even when they wound by their wrath ; that by their tenderness call forth tears of blood. And we would listen to Thy voice that fills even demons with dismay, so mighty is it, and charms little children, so sweet it is.

Thou knowest how great is the need of Thy glance and of Thy word in this very hour. Thou knowest that by a glance Thou canst lay hold upon our spirits and change them, that Thy voice can call us forth from our most abject misery ; Thou art aware, more profoundly aware than are we ourselves, that Thy presence is necessary and that Thy coming may not be deferred in this era that knows Thee not.

A first time Thou didst come to save ; Thou wast born to save, didst speak to save, didst submit to crucifixion that Thou mightest save ; Thine art, Thy mission, Thy work and Thy life are to save. And we, in these grey and wicked days, in these years wherein horror and suffering are heaped in a measure that surpasses the powers of endurance, we who live to-day, must be saved, and saved without delay.

If Thou wast a bitter and a jealous God, an unforgiving God, a God of vengeance or even of justice only, Thou wouldst not listen to our prayer ; for all the evil that man could do against Thee he has done, even after Thy death has he sinned, sinned indeed more grievously than while Thou wast still alive. We have all done evil against Thee, he also who now calls upon Thee with the rest. Millions, like Judas, have kissed Thee after having sold Thee, and not once only and for the paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver ; legions of Pharisees, innumerable Caiaphases have pronounced Thee a malefactor deserving to be crucified a second time ; and time and time again they have crucified Thee in thought and intention ; a loathsome rabble has covered Thee with spit and smitten Thee upon the face ; the servants, the doorkeepers and the soldiers of those who are unjustly endowed with power and riches have scourged Thy shoulders and caused the blood to flow from Thy forehead ; and thousands of Pilates, clad in black or crimson, fresh from the bath, perfumed and well groomed, have con-

signed Thee thousands of times to the executioners, after having recognized Thine innocence; and innumerable mouths, reeking with wine, have clamoured for the deliverance of bold robbers, confessed criminals, recognized assassins, that Thou mightest be dragged again and again to Golgotha and there nailed to the cross with irons forged by fear and driven home by hate.

But Thou hast forgiven all and always. Thou who hast dwelt amongst us knowest what lies at the bottom of our unhappy natures. We are but a damaged, bastard race; fading leaves carried before the wind; our own executioners, evil abortions that wallow in what is most filthy. . . . We repulsed Thee because Thou wast too pure for us; we condemned Thee to death because Thou wast the condemnation of our lives. Thou Thyself didst say so: 'I dwelt in the world, and in the flesh did I reveal myself unto them; and I found them all drunk and no one thirsted; and my soul grieves for the children of men, because of the blindness of their hearts.' All generations are like unto that which crucified Thee, and all refuse Thee, no matter under what form Thou comest. 'But whereunto shall I liken this generation?' Thou didst say. 'It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced, we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.' Thus has it been with us for sixty generations.

But now a time is come when men are more drunk than ever, but they are also still athirst. In no era has the consuming thirst for supernatural salvation been so keenly felt as in our own. At no time that man can remember has misery been so abject, have men's hearts been so seared. The earth is a hell, illumined only by the condescension of the sun, and mankind are sunk in a very quagmire of filth mixed with tears, whence they emerge from time to time, frenzied and convulsed, only to cast themselves into a seething cauldron of red blood in the hope of washing themselves clean. We have just passed through one of these fierce attempts at purification, and, with our numbers

horribly diminished, have again sunk back into our quagmire of foulness. Pestilence has followed in the footsteps of war, earthquakes have attended on pestilence; whole armies of rotting bodies, as many as would once have sufficed to people a kingdom, lie buried beneath a thin layer of worm-riddled earth, occupying, were they all assembled together, the space of many provinces. Yet, as were these dead but a first tribute to universal destruction, man continues to kill and to be killed. Rich nations condemn poor nations to starvation; the rebellious slay their masters of yesterday; those who are now masters send out their hirelings to slay the rebellious, new tyrants, taking advantage of the general dissolution of systems and regimes, lead whole nations to starvation, slaughter and destruction.

Each individual's brutal love of self, the selfishness of every caste, of every nation, is waxed more blind and gigantic since the years when hatred covered the earth with fire and smoke, and strewed it with graves and bones. Love of self has multiplied hate a hundredfold since mankind's universal and common defeat; the hatred of the weak for the strong, of the discontented for the eager, of the servants who are masters for the masters who are servants, of the striving classes for those that are succumbing, of the races that dominate for those they have subdued; of the conquered peoples for their conquerors. The greed for the superfluous has incurred the lack of the purely necessary; man's unnatural craving for amusement has become torment, and his straining after liberty has but tightened his fetters.

In these last years the human species, that was already writhing in the delirium of many fevers, has gone stark mad. The whole world rings with the noise of crumbling edifices; walls and columns lie buried in the dust, and the very mountains hurl from their summits avalanches of stone that the whole earth may become one uniform and desolate plain. Even those who had remained untainted in the peace of ignorance have been dragged by force from their rural pursuits, and brought to dwell, huddled together,

amidst the tumult and violence of great cities, there to suffer and become corrupt.

Everywhere is chaos and upheaval ; all is hopeless confusion ; the air is heavy with the stench of festering matter ; a restlessness that is dissatisfaction with all things, even with its own dissatisfaction, has affected all men. With all their passions unchained. men are consumed by a desire to injure their fellow-sufferers, and, in the hope of emerging from this inglorious circle of pain, court death in every form. Ecstatic and aphrodisiacal drugs, lusts that consume without satiating, alcohol, gambling and arms are daily destroying thousands who escaped the obligatory slaughter.

For four long years the world stained itself with blood to decide who should have the broadest lands, the greatest riches. The servants of Mammon sent Caliban to rot in interminable trenches that they themselves might acquire still greater wealth and impoverish their enemies. But this awful experience has been of no avail. Poorer and more famished than before, all nations have returned to prostrate themselves before the great clay-footed god whose name is Trade, upon whose altars they are ready to sacrifice their own peace and the lives of others. Divine Business and holy Money dominate the minds of men more strongly than ever before. He who has but little would have much ; he who has much would have more ; he who has the most would have all. Having learned to waste during those years that devoured all things, those who were once temperate are become gluttonous, those who were satisfied are become avid, the honest have taken to cheating, the most chaste are become impure. In the name of commerce, usury and appropriation are practised ; under cover of great enterprises, piracy is exercised by a few against many ; barrators and speculators hold the public moneys, and extortion is one of the principles upon which our oligarchies are based. Thieves, who alone obey justice, do not even spare their fellow-thieves. The ostentation of the rich has convinced all that nothing counts in this world, which has at last broken loose from heaven, save gold and what may be purchased and spoiled with gold.

On this infectious dust-heap all faiths fade and are dissolved. The world practises but one religion, that which recognizes the mighty trinity of Wotan, Mammon and Priapus : Force, whose symbol is the sword and whose temple is the barracks ; Riches, whose symbol is gold and whose temple is the stock exchange ; the Flesh, which is symbolized in Priapus and whose temple is the brothel. Such is the religion that reigns upon earth, which is devoutly practised in deed, if not always in word, by all the living. The family as it once was is broken up ; marriage is abolished by adultery and bigamy ; children are deemed a curse and child-bearing is avoided. . . .

There are no longer either republics or monarchies. Governments are become but hollow mockeries and counterfeits. Plutocracy and demagogy, sisters in purpose and in spirit, supported somewhat unwillingly by salaried mediocrity, contend with each other for control of the seditious masses, and meanwhile, above these two struggling orders, is caprocracy, an active and incontestible reality, which has substituted the lower for the higher, quantity for quality, impurity for what is spiritual.

Thou didst once say : ' When a man is alone, I am with him. Lift up the stone and ye shall find me, cut into the wood and I am there.' But to find Thee in the stone and in the wood we must possess the desire to seek for Thee, the capacity to see Thee. And to-day the majority of men cannot, will not find Thee. If Thou dost not make them feel Thy hand upon their heads and hear Thy voice within their hearts, they will continue to seek only themselves, albeit without finding, for no one can possess himself unless he possess Thee. We therefore pray Thee, Christ Jesus, we the unregenerate, the guilty, who are come into an era that is not our own, who still remember Thee and try to live with Thee, but who are always far from Thee, we, the last, the despairing, who have escaped dangers and been snatched from the edge of precipices ; we entreat Thee to come once again amongst those who crucified Thee, amongst those who still slay Thee day by day, that Thou mayest

shed upon all of us, who are but murderers in the dark, the light of true life.

Since Thy Resurrection Thou hast more than once appeared to the living. To those who believed they hated Thee, to those who would have loved Thee even hadst Thou not been the Son of God, Thou hast shown Thy face and spoken with Thine own voice. The hermit dwelling in the shelter of a rock in the sandy desert, the monk in his cell praying the long night through, the saint on the bleak mountain summit, all saw and heard Thee, and henceforth prayed only to be allowed to die that they might be reunited to Thee. Thou wast light and the word in Paul's way, fire and blood in Francis' cell, love intense and perfect in the cells of Catherine and of Theresa. As Thou didst return for a single soul, why wilt Thou not now return for all? If by their passionate hope these had earned the right to behold Thee, may we not pledge our utter despair. Those souls appealed to Thee by their innocence; ours call out to Thee from the depths of their weakness and shame. As Thou didst reward the ecstasy of the saints, why wilt Thou not let the cry of the damned come unto Thee? Didst Thou not say that Thou wast come for the sick rather than for the well, for him who has gone astray rather than for them who have remained? And now Thou seest that mankind is sick with pest and fevers, and that each one of us, through seeking himself, has lost himself and Thee also. Never has Thy message been so necessary as to-day, and never as to-day has it been so little heeded and so despised. The reign of Satan has reached its full maturity, and the salvation towards which staggering humanity yearns can come but through Thy reign.

The great experience is nearing its end. Mankind disavowed Thy Gospel and found desolation and death. More than one promise, more than one threat has been fulfilled. Only the hope of Thy return remains to us in our despair. That Thou dost not come to awaken those who sleep beneath the foul soil of this hell of ours is a sign that Thou considerest the punishment for our betrayal still too short, still insufficient, and that Thou wilt not

change the order of Thy laws. And Thy will be done now and always, in heaven as on earth.

But we, the last, are waiting for Thee. We will still expect Thee day by day, in spite of our own unworthiness, in spite of the impossible itself. And all the love of which our ravaged hearts are capable is for Thee, O Crucified One, who wast tortured for our sakes and who now dost torture us with Thine implacable love.

THE END